The Rôle of a Minor Party
A Comparative Study of the British Liberal Party and the Australian Country Party since 1918

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ABSTRACT

The Rôle of a Minor Party

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The thesis examines the proposition that the rôle of a minor party is determined, not by its total strength expressed as a percentage of the national vote, but by how its strength is concentrated.

Australia and Britain were chosen for the comparison because of the many similarities in political culture and in the extent of class voting. Each country has a party - the Country Party in Australia and the Liberal Party in Britain - which has had a distinct impact on the political scene in their respective countries. In the period from 1918 to the present day neither party, at the national level, has ever held the largest number of seats in parliament let alone a majority of seats, and it is in this sense that they are herein defined as minor parties.

In the thesis the constitutional background of and differences between Australia and Britain are reviewed, followed by a brief historical picture of each of the two parties being studied. The sources of support of the two parties are analysed and it is here that real differences emerge. The Country Party in Australia is a deliberately sectional party with a narrow rural base, whereas the British Liberal Party is more broadly based than either the Labour or Conservative Parties in Britain.

Party leadership and organisation are then discussed. Both parties have had outstanding leaders, Earle Page and McEwen for the Country Party; Asquith, Lloyd George and Grimond for the Liberal Party. Both parties have had relatively fewer leaders than their major party opponents. However, whereas the Country Party has been free of serious splits the Liberal Party was shattered on the leadership struggles of Asquith and Lloyd George.

Both parties have been identified with decentralisation of state power, the Country Party through its support, albeit sometimes lukewarm of the New States Movement; the Liberal Party through its espousal of a federal system for Britain with separate Welsh, Scottish and regional assemblies. Unfortunately for the British Liberal Party the beneficiaries of their policies in this area have been relatively new nationalist parties in both Wales and Scotland.

The major part of the thesis is devoted to a study of how the electoral systems in the two countries have, in practice, worked to the advantage or disadvantage of the Country Party and the British Liberal Party. The Country Party has been as consistently over-represented in the House of Representatives as the Liberal Party has been under-represented in the British House of Commons. With the even distribution of its support the introduction of the single transferable vote, in itself, would bring little benefit to the British Liberal Party in terms of seats. Multi-member urban constituencies combined with some type of list system are the only way the Liberals are likely to obtain House of Commons seats in proportion to their votes.

Finally, the relations of the two minor parties with their respective major parties are considered. In the conclusion the future of the two parties is reviewed. In general terms it appears that the Country Party is faced with a slow decline. Although the British Liberal Party made a major breakthrough, in terms of votes, in the February 1974 election, they were unable to maintain this momentum in the October election, even though they lost very little ground. In the long term they must make an inroad into Labour held seats if they are to progress further.

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"Though introductory, it aims at a close introduction. It is an opinionated book: I do not think it is worth writing about politics any other way". - A.F. Davies in "Australian Democracy: An Introduction to the Political System".

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Since 1918, the British Liberal Party and the Australian Country Party have enjoyed comparable shares of the total national vote in their respective countries. Neither party, in over half a century, has ever had a clear majority at any time and, in this sense, both can be defined as minor parties. The Liberal Party in Britain excluding the Lloyd George Coalition government (1918-1922), the National Liberals (1931-1935) and the 1940-1945 wartime coalition, has never achieved any share in governmental power, whereas the Country Party has had a significant share of power, primarily at the Commonwealth level but also in a number of the Australian States.

The thesis examines the proposition that the rôle of a minor party is determined, not by its total strength expressed as a percentage of the national vote, but by how its strength is concentrated. The concentration of its strength is mainly determined by the relative narrowness of its policies and goals and the electoral environment, as represented by constitutional constraints and the electoral system.

The topic is approached by first considering the constitutional framework in Australia and Britain and the historical development of the two parties since 1918. Their sources of support, party leadership and

organisation, are analysed. The only major policy similarity is in their espousal of regionalism or new states, and the respective reasons for this policy are reviewed. Because of its impact on their respective fortunes the influence of the electoral system in Australia and Britain is examined in some detail. Finally the relations of the two parties with the other parties, and particularly the two major parties, is discussed since these relations reflect on their ability to achieve electoral success. In the concluding chapter, the validity of the thesis is examined in the light of the data presented and, from the basis of the thesis, a prediction made regarding the relative future rôle of the two parties considered.

In order to provide a perspective for the whole thesis, an analysis has been made of the degree of "success", measured in years of government power, achieved by the Country Party and the British Liberal Party. This introduction also reviews the reasons for choosing these two particular parties, in these two countries, for the examination of the rôle of a minor party, with special reference to the type of governmental system, cultural and constitutional similarities and the influence of class consciousness.

The relative success of the Australian Country Party and the British Liberal Party can most readily be measured in terms of the proportion of time spent in government since 1918, expressed simply as years in government divided by the total years in the period 1918 to 1974. This is shown for Australia in Table 1 and for Britain in Table 2. The total

sum of these proportions is a measure of the extent to which coalition or composite governments have been in power and this sum is called the "coalition coefficient".

Table 1

Australia - Proportion of Years in Government by Party

	Commonwealth	Queensland	Victoria	South Australia	Western Australia	NSW	Tasmania
Australian Labor Party	.23	.63	.26	.25	.51	.54	.74
Country Party	.65	.37	.33	.07	.39	.35	.05
Liberals and predecessors*	.77	.37	.70	.75	.49	.46	.26
Coalition Coefficient	1.65	1.37	1.30	1.07	1.39	1.35	1.05

* United Australia Party and National Party.

Table 2

Britain - Proportion of Years in Government by Party

Conservatives	0.73
Labour	0.36
Lloyd George Liberals (1918-1922)	0.08
National Liberals (1931-1935)	0.07
Liberals	0.09
Coalition Coefficient	1.33

The Lloyd George and National Liberals have been included in Table 2 because of the difficulty in determining, in absolute terms, who were the true successors of the Liberal Party at the time. However, Ramsay MacDonald's National Labour Party (1931-35) has been excluded since it was totally divorced from the Labour Party.

All data, for both countries, are for the lower Houses. All Country Party time in government has been as members of coalition or composite governments, with the exception of two and a half years (1950-52) in Victoria when they formed a minority government, with ALP support, even though they held only one fifth of the seats in the legislature. This would be similar to the Liberal Party in Britain winning 125 seats, the Conservatives 260 seats and Labour 240 seats and the Liberals forming a minority government - this particular seat distribution would have been very closely in line with the actual votes received by the parties in the February 1974 general election. The average coalition coefficient for the seven Australian lower houses is 1.31, very similar to that for Britain despite the differences in the electoral systems. In this respect, it is also of interest to note that Tasmania, which is the only State to have proportional representation for election to the House of Assembly, has the lowest coalition coefficient.

The British Liberal Party is often viewed as a Centre Party though, as discussed in Chapter 4, this may not be the way in which the Liberal Party regards itself. In some respects, the Country Party

is more 'conservative' on for example such matters as the retention of capital punishment, than the Liberal Party of Australia. It would like to see itself as 'the true middle of the road party' or the 'small man's party'.[1] As a point of similarity on the political spectrum, this comparison is questionable.

One basic difference between Australia and Britain is in the form of governmental system. Lipson ranks the United Kingdom and older Commonwealth countries on a Unitary —— Federal Scale in the following order:- New Zealand, United Kingdom, South Africa, Canada and Australia with the latter as the most strongly federal. He then makes the comment that "the countries in which the two-party system is most firmly established (New Zealand and the United Kingdom) are the very two whose institutions are most definitely centralised and unitary".[2] A comparison on the rôle of minor parties could be made between Australia and Canada, two British origin federal systems. However, as Mayer defines federalism,[3] Canada is a 'congruent' federal system because the legal institutions of federalism are congruent with a cultural or economic environment reflecting geographically defined diversities, whereas Australia is a 'formalistic' federal system

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[1] D.W. Rawson, Australia Votes: The 1958 Federal Election. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1961), p.53.

[2] L. Lipson. "Party Systems in the United Kingdom and the Older Commonwealth: Causes, Resemblances, and Variations". Political Studies, VII (1959), p.20.

[3] Lawrence Mayer. "Federalism and Party Behavior in Australia and Canada." The Western Political Quarterly. 23(4) December 1970, p.795.

with a relatively homogeneous society. In support of this he refers to 1961 census data which shows the range of percentage Roman Catholics in the population as 17 to 23 per cent among the six Australian States and from 17.5 to 88.1 per cent among the ten Canadian Provinces. In addition in Canada the linguistic range is even greater with a minimum of 3.7 per cent of the population, in Newfoundland, showing French as their first language, to a maximum of 80.6 per cent in Quebec. It was not desired to introduce differences such as these into the comparison though there is obviously no reason why the hypothesis on the rôle of minor parties could not be tested against Canadian conditions.

The similarities between Australian and United Kingdom political culture are illustrated by some of the areas where the two countries are ranked together in the Banks and Textor data,[1] as follows:

- Interest Articulation by Institutional Groups is Limited.
- Interest Articulation by Associational Groups is Significant.
- Interest Articulation by Anomic Groups is Very Infrequent.
- Interest Articulation by Political Parties is Moderate.
- Interest Aggregation by Political Parties is Significant.
- Interest Aggregation by the Executive is Moderate.
- Interest Aggregation by the Legislature is Moderate.
- Party System is Qualitatively Class-Oriented or Multi-Ideological.

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[1] Arthur S. Banks and Robert B. Textor. A Cross-Polity Survey (Cambridge (Mass.): M.I.T. Press, 1963), from data printouts.

- Political Leadership is Moderately Elitist (U.K.) or Non-Elitist (Australia).
- Bureaucracy is Modern.
- Character of Legal System is Common Law.

Although there are numerous European countries where minor parties play a significant rôle, none is as closely comparable as Australia and Britain. One final point of similarity is in the extent of class voting. Alford defined[1] an index of class voting as the percentage of manual workers voting for Left parties minus the percentage of non-manual workers voting for Left parties and found, over the ten year period 1952 to 1962, that the mean index for Britain was 40, Australia 33, U.S.A. 16 and Canada 8. He also found[2] that the mean class voting index when two class characteristics (education, income, subjective social class and trade union membership each with occupation) were considered together, showed an index for Britain 10 to 20 percent higher than Australia, but nearly double that for the U.S.A. and three to nearly six times as high as for Canada. Alford advanced several reasons for this, particularly between Britain and Australia on the one hand and the U.S.A. and Canada on the other, namely - lower per capita national income; the explicit links of the trade unions with the Labour parties

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[1]Robert R. Alford, Party and Society. (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1963), p.102.

[2]Ibid., p.106.

in Australia and Britain; significantly lower number of students per 1,000 population in higher education, as an indicator of lower social mobility; and also the significantly lower ratio of salaried workers to wage-earners in manufacturing establishments, as an indicator of greater stratification in the work force[1]. As will be seen later, and particularly in chapter 5, class voting is a significant factor in British and Australian politics. The domination of class politics pulls the major parties to the Left, compared with the U.S.A. and Canada[2]. Because of its significance, in terms of voting behaviour, it was desirable to eliminate it as a variable and whether education, income or occupation were used, singly or in combination, as the measure of social position the level of class voting in Canada was lower in all regions and in either major religious grouping (Protestant or Catholic) than it is in Australia or Britain[3].

With the elimination of class voting as a significant variable the major difference remaining, between Australia and Britain, lay in the electoral systems. In Britain the simple 'first past the post' system is now universal whereas in Australia the single transferable vote is the most common with various forms of proportional representation also used.

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[1]Robert R. Alford, Party and Society. (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1963), pp. 117-130.

[2]Ibid., p. 300.

[3]Ibid., p. 250.

Finally, are the rôle and importance of a minor party worth considering or are they merely a nuisance on the larger national political scene? Although they may well be a 'nuisance' to the major parties both the Country Party and the British Liberal Party espouse ideals that contain some sort of universal appeal. The Liberals appeal is more general and states that "The Liberal Party exists to build a Liberal Society in which every citizen shall possess liberty, property and security, and none shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity. Its chief care is for the rights and opportunities of the individual, and in all spheres it sets freedom first".[1] John McEwen described the Country Party as "a specialist party. In the nature of things, we know more, as a political organisation, about life and industry outside the metropolitan cities than any other political party does. We have a more concentrated interest in it, because we do not have representation from the metropolitan cities nor domination from the metropolitan cities".[2] Although their political opponents may dispute the uniqueness of these claims, there are enough similarities and contrasts between the two parties being studied to make valid comparisons.

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[1]John D. Lees and Richard Kimber, eds. Political Parties in Modern Britain. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p.15.

[2]John McEwen, "The Rôle of the Country Party" in Australian Politics: A Second Reader, ed. by Henry Mayer, 2nd.ed. (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1969), p.338.

CHAPTER 2

CONSTITUTIONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND GREAT BRITAIN

The principal constitutional differences between Australia and Great Britain are in the form of the Constitution and in the basic type of system. Australia is a Federal system, whereas Britain to-date has exemplified the strongly unitary system. Britain has no formal written Constitution unlike Australia which does.

Under the Australian Federal system the States tend in many respects to be more powerful than the Provinces of Canada. There is a simple reason for this. All the States had Constitutions of their own that antedate that of the Commonwealth. Like the United States and Swiss constitutions the Australian constitution gives specified powers to the Federal Government and leaves all the residual powers in the hands of the states, which is the opposite of the case in Canada under the British North America Act. One view of the merits of written constitutions is that they "are, in the main, expressions of the distrust which a people feels of its government or a government feels of its people".[1] The U.S. Constitution is a prime example of the former but the Australian Constitution was more an outgrowth of economic and geographical factors. The

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[1] A.F. Pollard. The Evolution of Parliament (2nd ed.; London: Longmans, 1926), p.233.

British approach to written constitutions is attacked by some critics on the basis that the British are" a most illogical people who act upon instinct, who are too lazy to abandon their clumsy groping and stumbling along the political path, and who so far have by great good fortune - perhaps by some form of divine protection - escaped disaster. This intriguing picture is, of course, a rhetorical exaggeration, because in fact the British Constitution has in essence existed for a thousand years".[1]

The primary feature of the British constitutional system is that there is no set of laws endowed with a higher legal authority than any other laws. The British constitutional system is composed of four main sources:

1) Statutes

2) Case or common law

3) Conventions

4) Views of constitutional authorities.

There are over three hundred statutes and documents of some constitutional significance but the outstanding ones are as follows:

1215 Magna Carta

1534 Marches in Wales Act

1628 Petition of Right

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[1]F.W.G. Benemy. The Elected Monarch (London: Harrap, 1965), p.210.

1641 The Grand Remonstrance

1689 Bill of Rights

1707 Act of Union with Scotland

1832 Representation of the People Acts (The Reform Act). Further Acts followed in 1867, 1884, 1918, 1928, 1948, 1949 and 1969 .

1911 Parliament Act

1931 Statute of Westminster

1972 European Communities Act.

The Acts through to the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the ensuing Bill of Rights were primarily concerned with the struggle between King and Parliament. The nineteenth century saw the basic reforms that eventually led to universal suffrage at age of eighteen and the limiting of the powers of the House of Lords. The Statute of Westminster gave recognition to the sovereign powers of the Dominion governments and the European Communities Act in taking Britain into the European Common Market may bring about future political changes. Many of the major statutes were the products of constitutional crisis and contain the terms of settlement of those crises[1]. The 1534 and 1706 Acts formally united Wales and Scotland with England and it was not until 1966 that Plaid Cymru first elected a member to the House of Commons, followed a year later by the first Scottish

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[1]Gwendolen M. Carter. The Government of the United Kingdom (2nd.ed.; New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967), p.28.

National Party member. Both these parties are more secessionist than even federalist and with the Liberal Party committed to some form of federalism there is the possibility in the future that Britain will cease to be a unitary state.

Case or common law has cumulatively developed over the centuries as a result of court decisions. These decisions have been the basis of the rule of law, though it can be argued that respect for the rule of law can be weakened if the fundamental laws can be too readily changed at the dictate of the political party with the most seats in the House of Commons. This question is explored in more detail later since it is a risk that is underlined by the gross under-representation in the 1974 House of Commons of the large Liberal vote. In Australia, it tends to be underlined for the opposite reason - out-of-proportion Country Party influence due to major differences in the value of an urban and a country vote. In the end, the protection of the constitution is in the hearts and minds of the people[1] and common law is clearly perceived as protecting the fundamental liberties of the citizens and imposing restrictions on arbitrary governmental power. This is a unique feature of British law and is not universal throughout the so-called British Dominions. South Africa, in the pursuit of apartheid, has severely curtailed judicial independence. In the Province of Quebec a person may be acquitted by a jury and the Government

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[1] Gwendolen M. Carter. The Government of the United Kingdom (2nd.ed.; New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967), p.29.

can appeal the acquittal to a higher court, where the accused has no right to trial by jury, and secure a conviction.

Conventions and customs are important in the British system. The method of selection and the powers of the Prime Minister are not laid down by statute but are a matter of convention, and conventions do change with time. The views of constitutional authorities carry great weight in times of constitutional crisis and range from Bracton, a mid-thirteenth century royal judge, through Fitzherbert (the early Tudors), Coke (Chief Justice under Elizabeth I and James I), Blackstone in the eighteenth century to Jennings of more recent times. The strength of the British system has been its pragmatic approach to the problems of the day which has led to some debatable 'solutions'. Because Northern Ireland had its own Parliament it was deliberately under-represented, by about thirty percent, in the House of Commons relative to its population, whereas Wales and Scotland, because they have no parliament of their own, as yet, are equally deliberately over-represented - Wales by about nine percent and Scotland by fifteen percent. The danger of pragmatic solutions is that as circumstances change the basis for the solution may disappear but vested interests may be opposed to further changes. If the secret of success in making the British system work is the willingness to seek reasonable compromise, then extremism and political polarisation are its greatest dangers. As Benemy points out[1] if the supreme merit of an unwritten constitution is its flexibility

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[1] Benemy, p.248.

there is also the danger that the opportunity is provided for a dictatorship, if not of a single individual, then of an oligarchy which could lead eventually to a paternalistic authoritarian government. "Parliament could quite legally, extend its own term of office forever, turn England into a republic, make Buddhism the established religion, or restrict the right to vote to women of seventy and over".[1] The only reason any of the things in the quotation are absurd is if the actions of Parliament lie in responsible self-restraint. The use of Parliament to further conservative anti-unionism or Labour pro-nationalization to extreme levels can only undermine the moral authority of Parliament to speak for the nation as a whole. Although similar policies occur in similar form in Australia the existence of a federal system with a written constitution and judicial review may tend to modify the pace of radical change.

The Australian Constitution has another feature in common with the Swiss Constitution and that is the provision for holding a referendum, but only on changes to the Constitution proposed by the Commonwealth Parliament. "Why could not the foolish Swiss realize, asked a prominent British legal writer, that it was Parliament which was sovereign, and not the people? This really is the reductio ad absurdum of the British concept of Parliamentary government".[2] This aspect is considered in detail later,

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[1] Carter, p.31.

[2] Colin Clark. Australian Hopes and Fears. (London: Hollis & Carter, 1958), p.100.

when the electoral systems are reviewed, and which shows that virtually one out of every five British voters (for the Liberal Party) are effectively disenfranchised.

Australian history starts at the end of the eighteenth century with the arrival of Captain Arthur Phillip, R.N., as the first Governor of New South Wales with the First Fleet carrying 290 officials, marines, women and children, 520 male convicts and 197 female convicts. In 1823 the British Parliament enacted the New South Wales Act, which created separate Supreme Courts for NSW and Van Diemen's Land (now Tasmania) and a small nominated Legislative Council. In 1841, New Zealand was proclaimed a separate colony and in 1842 the first Australian Constitution Act was enacted by the British Parliament setting up a Legislative Council for NSW with two-thirds of its members elected.

It was in 1846 that the first officially recorded suggestion for a central authority over all the Australian Colonies was made - by Governor Fitzroy of NSW. In 1851 Victoria was separated from NSW and in 1856 South Australian Constitution Act was passed and the first parliaments under responsible government met in NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia. Three years later the northernmost district of NSW was proclaimed the separate colony of Queensland and in 1870 partial responsible government was introduced in Western Australia.

In 90 years the Australian population had grown from one thousand to two and a quarter million people. The first Federal conference was held

in Sydney in 1883 and in 1885 the British Parliament enacted the Federal Council of Australasia Act which enabled Fiji, New Zealand, NSW, South Australia, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia to participate voluntarily in a confederate style constitutional arrangement.

The first session of the Federal Council of Australasia met in Hobart the following year but little of note occurred until a second meeting was held in Melbourne in 1890. This called for the convening of a National Australasian Convention, which met in Sydney in 1891 and approved a draft federal constitution for submission to the Australasian colonies. Efforts to get Parliamentary approval failed and in 1895 the conference of Premiers of the six Australian colonies declared that Federation was needed, with a Convention of directly elected representatives from each Colony to carry out the drafting of a constitution.

Two years later, in March 1897, the first meeting of the Australasian Federal Convention met in Adelaide with directly elected delegates from all the colonies except Queensland. A second meeting was held six months later in Sydney, and finally a third meeting the following March in Melbourne. The pace accelerated and in 1899 referenda in NSW, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria approved the proposed constitution. The electors of Western Australia followed suit in 1900 but the government of New Zealand advised the British Government that it did not wish, at that time, to join the proposed federation but wished to reserve its right to do so later. With the unanimity of the mainland colonies decided the British Parliament passed the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act and the

Commonwealth was formally proclaimed in Sydney on January 1, 1901. Originally the first Commonwealth Parliament opened in Melbourne. It was not until 1908 that Canberra was selected as the site of the capital and, nearly twenty years later, in 1927 that the seat of the Commonwealth was actually transferred from Melbourne to Canberra.

In 1919 Australia was accorded separate representation at the Versailles Peace Conference, marking the first major step in the evolution of the development of an independent foreign policy for Australia. In 1930 the first Australian Governor-General was appointed, but it was not until 1952 that the first Canadian born Governor-General was appointed. It was not until 1942 that the Statute of Westminster Adoption Act was passed, retroactive to the date of the outbreak of the Second World War, September 3, 1939, which made the Commonwealth Government no longer subject to control from Westminster. The States, it can be argued are still theoretically subject to the British Parliament but it is difficult to conceive of any situation where the British Parliament would be willing to intervene.

The Australian Constitution, compared with those of some of the newer nations, is a reasonably concise document. Articles 9 and 31 lay down that the method of choosing senators shall be uniform for all the States but the methods for electing the House of Representatives shall be the same as for electing the State Lower Houses unless provided otherwise by Parliament. The final clause is most important since it means that Parliament, or the majority at any particular time, can alter the electoral laws. In

fact, this is the current Australian Labor Party policy. They wish to eliminate the proportional representation features of the present electoral system in order to destroy the influence of the Democratic Labor Party and weaken the Country Party. From the ALP viewpoint this is certainly practical power politics but raises questions of the rights of minorities, which are not always too well respected even under supposedly democratic regimes.

Article 53 restrains the Senate from originating any money bills or from making amendments to money bills. However, the Senate may return such bills to the House of Representatives. Since this represents an obvious source of conflict there is provision, in Article 57, for resolving such conflicts by a double dissolution of both Houses and simultaneous elections, such as was experienced in May of this year. If there is still a deadlock the Governor-General may convene a joint sitting, which then requires an absolute majority of the total number of members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, which the ALP now has.

The powers of the High Court of Australia are defined in Articles 71-80. Apart from its judicial review power over all Parliamentary legislation it is also the final court of appeal from the State Supreme Courts.

The articles dealing with the establishment of New States are discussed in detail (see chapter 7). Article 128 lays down the amending procedure for the Constitution which requires a proposed amendment to

have the approval of the House of Representatives, the Senate, a majority of all electors voting and a majority of electors in a majority of States. It is this final provision that has proven the stumbling block for many proposed amendments, and Tasmania, the smallest State, has exercised a negative vote the most often. To date the Constitution has acted as a brake on the more extreme socialist measures of the ALP. This has vividly illustrated the fact that although voters faced with the choice of electing a government may, on balance, decide to vote for a particular party when they have to decide on an extreme aspect of that party's policy they vote against it. It is probably reasonable to surmise that there are a fair number of Labour Party voters in Britain who prefer the Labour Party policy on the Social services but who would vote against a specific question relating to further nationalisation of a large range of industry. This matter relates directly to the earlier comment on the Swiss Constitution and the use of the referendum. The British political establishment is firmly opposed to the referendum. I would surmise that one reason for this opposition lies in the aristocratic tradition that the people are best governed by their 'betters', as well as the common argument that the use of the referendum detracts from the responsibility of a Government to govern. Class attitudes bedevil British society and nowhere more so than in politics. Edward Heath was the first grammar school student to become the Conservative leader. Some Labour leaders, whilst urging comprehensive schools for the masses, send their own children to public (which in Britain means private) schools. Class snobbery underlay the conflict between Herbert Asquith and

David Lloyd-George. There are ill-informed, ignorant and bigotted electors at all class levels, in and out of Parliament. The objection to the referendum is that it poses a threat to the party establishments and many parties appear to feel that government is for the benefit of political parties not for the people.

There are some significant features of the Australian system in practice that are different from that in Great Britain. The life of the Commonwealth House of Representatives, and many of the State Houses, is only three years not five as in Britain. Two-thirds of the members of the Federal House are elected from NSW and Victoria, and Tasmania has five seats, the minimum number for a State as laid down in the Constitution. All the States have Upper Houses except Queensland which abolished its in 1922. All the upper houses have a normal term of six years, except NSW which is twelve. The NSW Legislative Council, as the Upper House is known, is not elected directly but by a joint sitting of both Houses of the NSW legislature. The Federal Senate is elected under proportional representation and the State Legislative Councils with a preferential voting system.

Ministers can be drawn from both Houses, both at the Federal and State level, with the Prime Minister or Premier and the majority of the ministers from the lower house. The number of ministers varies from State to State. Coalition and minority governments are common at both the Federal and State levels. The Country Party governed Victoria with first the support of one party and then the support of another, even when the Country Party itself was the smallest of the three parties in the Legislative

Assembly. As a minority Government can continue only so long as it can keep the support of the other party, changes of Government have been frequent in some States. Victoria had fifty-seven Governments and thirty-eight Premiers in a century, its shortest Government (in 1943) having lasted only five days. New South Wales had the shortest Government on record in 1921 - a Ministry that lasted only seven hours[1].

The size of the various Australian Houses is small by British standards. The Australian House of Representatives has 127 members compared to 630 in the British House of Commons. The Tasmanian Legislative Council is the smallest Upper House with only nineteen members, whilst the Tasmanian Lower House has only thirty-five members and the South Australia Lower House forty-seven. Even the NSW Lower House, which is the largest of the State Lower Houses, has only ninety-six members. The Federal Senate has sixty members and with proportional representation the two major parties are assured of complete safety for two-thirds of their teams. A consequence of these small numbers is that Government majorities of one or two are fairly common and the effects of major illness, death or defection are enormously magnified. This may account for some of the very bitter feuds that accompany party splits in Australia. In Britain, the effect of an individual member leaving his party is minimal, though this does not seem to lessen the vigour with which such heretics are pursued,

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[1] C.R. Forell, How We Are Governed. (2nd.ed.; Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1966), p.32.

particularly on the Labour side. Vacancies in the Australian Senate are filled by vote of the relevant State Parliament. In some, for example Western Australia, it is conventional to treat such seats as the property of the late incumbents party; others subsume them in state cabinet patronage or by a joint sitting of the State Houses[1].

Some of the financial features of the Australian Government are unique. Overborrowing by one state could have affected the credit of all the other states and of the Commonwealth. A financial agreement was approved by all the Governments and by referendum and came into force in 1928. This provided that all borrowing by the State or Commonwealth Governments (except for the latter in the case of purposes of defence) should be made only through a Loan Council. This Council consists of a representative of each State and of the Commonwealth, the latter with two votes and a casting vote. It therefore requires only two States to vote with the Commonwealth to block the other states. Tasmania, Western Australia and to a lesser extent South Australia were often in financial trouble and since 1933 payments from the Commonwealth Treasury have been made through the Commonwealth Grants Commission. These are a form of 'equalisation' payments but the effect has been to lower the level of fiscal responsibility of these smaller states and to encourage horse-trading between them and the Commonwealth for support to the latter on the Loan Council. As a specific example of the type

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[1] A.F. Davies, Australian Democracy: An Introduction to the Political System. (Melbourne: Longmans, Green, 1958), p.49.

of problem this raises, NSW and Victoria were interested in building nuclear power stations in the latter half of the sixties. However, such plants require large amounts of capital and the large states could not see the small states agreeing to this, since there was no direct benefit to them. Like most compromises the system is not perfect but on balance it has probably been a great deal fairer than leaving all the financial power to the big states.

There has been only one major move to revise the Constitution as a whole. The first moves to call a new Constitutional Convention came from the Parliament of Victoria in 1970. These were the outcome of State discontent with the results of Premiers Conferences and the workings of the Commonwealth Loan Council. Victoria also was upset by several High Court decisions that they considered to be unfavorable to the State. For a variety of reasons all the Premiers wished to review certain sections, and not the same ones for each State and they agreed that the Convention delegates should be made up of sixteen from the Commonwealth parliament, twelve from each State, with two each from the Northern Territories and the Australian Commonwealth Territory and a local government delegation of three from each State. However, the delegations from the Territories and the Local Governments would have only one vote for each delegation. The Northern Territories were also allowed to send two non-voting representatives from its Legislative Council. The party composition of the parliamentary delegations are shown in table 3

Table 3

Composition of Parliamentary Delegations to the 1973 Constitutional Convention at Sydney[1]

	A.L.P.	D.L.P.	LIB.	C.P.	L.C.L.	IND.	TOTAL
Commonwealth	8	1	4	3	-	-	16
New South Wales	6	-	3	3	-	-	12
Queensland	5	-	3	4	-	-	12
South Australia	6	-	1	-	5	-	12
Tasmania	5	-	3	-	-	4	12
Victoria	4	-	5	3	-	-	12
Western Australia	6	-	4	2	-	-	12
Northern Territories	1	-	-	-	-	1	2
Total	41	1	23	15	5	5	90

In July 1973, the Steering Committee listed the following main areas of concern[2].

(a) Methods of amending the Constitution and varying the distribution of powers.

(b) Additional powers that may be conferred to enable the Commonwealth to exercise adequate powers to manage the Australian economy.

(c) The financial provisions of the Constitution; and

(d) The legislative powers and immunities with respect to trade and commerce.

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[1] J.E. Richardson. "The Australian Constitutional Convention, Sydney, 1973". The Australian Quarterly, 45(4) (December 1973), 106-108

[2] Ibid.,p.91.

The Convention opened on September 3, 1973 in Sydney. In the opening address, Sir Robert Askin (Premier of NSW) identified the main problem as financial, "although the bulk of legislative powers and, as a corollary, responsibility for the great range of community services rests with the States, the bulk of financial resources required to maintain proper standards in existing services and to initiate new ones is in Commonwealth control".[1]

Prime Minister Whitlam proposed the following constitutional changes for approval.[2]

(i) Synchronisation of elections to the Senate and House of Representatives;

(ii) An amendment to secure the principle of substantial equality of electoral divisions for all Parliaments in Australia; and

(iii) A provision to require State Houses of Parliament to be elected directly by the people.

The proposals to alter the existing Constitutional amendment procedure (article 128) met with little support from non-Labor State delegates. The Commonwealth delegates were opposed to the proposal to allow the States to submit proposed Constitutional amendments[3].

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[1] Richardson, p.92

[2] Ibid.,p.93

[3] Ibid., p.96

There were numerous references[1] to the Canadian income tax system whereby all the Provinces (except Quebec) get the Federal Government to collect an additional percentage of income tax for the Provinces own use.

Sir Charles Court, then the Western Australia Opposition Leader and now Premier, referred to Western Australia secessionist sentiment[2]. In July 1974, he commented[3] that any federal government that ignored secessionist feeling in Western Australia did so at its own peril. While the possibility that Western Australia will become a separate, independent nation is regarded in most political quarters as remote, the growth of the secessionist movement is a measure of the opposition aroused, not only in the west but also in other states, towards moves by the government of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam to enlarge the power of the central government at the expense of the states.

Although far from perfect, the Australian Constitution does appear to provide a better climate for the recognition of minority political views. The supremacy of Parliament, as practised in Britain, may serve only as a cloak for the supremacy of the two major party machines. Although this is infinitely preferable to supremacy by a single party it offers far less than ideal representation of other viewpoints. Both the Labour and Conservative parties in Britain embrace a wide range of views, but the

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[1] Richardson, pp.97,98.

[2] Ibid., p.99.

[3] The Montreal Star, July 31, 1974, p.2.

opportunities for dissident groups to directly alter legislative policy are much more limited than in say the United States Congress or as a separate party such as the Australian Country Party.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORY OF THE AUSTRALIAN COUNTRY PARTY

Rural political groups of various hues were starting to organise at the end of the nineteenth century and "while the emergence of the Australian Country Party was undoubtedly aided by the marketing and price controls used during World War I, their appearance on the political stage makes sense only if it is seen as the product of factors which were operating well before 1914. At one level, the country party movement can be explained as an outcome of three broad factors - the feeling of political separatism which the insecurity of their industry gave the wheat farmers, especially those in the newly developed regions; the strength of the agrarian tradition in rural Australia; and the progressive development of organisational and political techniques by farm groups from about 1870 onwards. At another level, the movement within each state was advanced or retarded by local factors."[1]

At a lower level, but obviously illustrative of the emotional appeal of the Country Party is strong anti-city sentiment, as cited by Gruen[2] in the following quotation from an editorial in a country paper:

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[1] B.D. Graham, The Formation of the Australian Country Parties (Canberra:Australian National University Press, 1966), p. 94.

[2] F.H. Gruen, "Rural Australia",in Australian Society:A Sociological Introduction, ed. by A.F. Davies and S. Encel (New York: Atherton Press, 1965), p. 256.

"It is a shameful thing that a predominantly agricultural country such as ours should have overcrowded cities while rural areas are being denuded of population... Wars are bred in overcrowded cities, the enfeeblement and extinction of nations begins there".

In considering rural Australian political development it is important to realise that the small farming communities of Australia and North America have little in common with the traditional peasant communities of Western Europe[1]. The peasant societies were a product of earlier feudal societies, whereas the farmers of the new lands felt beholden to no one. However, there are also significant differences between the political evolution of the Australian farmers and their North American counterparts. The North American crusades against proprietary railway companies, grain elevator firms, and the great grain exchanges had only faint echoes in Australia where the state built railways, the grain trade was disorganised, and most agricultural production was for home consumption[2] because of the distance from foreign markets. The Australian farmer's frontier was economic rather than geographic. His life, and that of his family, was a hard one and he had to grow wheat on land where the squatter and the pastoral worker were the masters.

The basic support for the formation of a distinctively Country Party came from four groups:

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[1] Graham, p.291.

[2] Ibid., p.291.

- graziers worried about rising tariffs
- dairy farmers unhappy about price-fixing methods
- conservatives fearful of Labor influence in the Hughes National Government
- returning soldiers (in 1919) contemptuous of existing parties.

Apart from some "rural mystique" there is no Country Party political philosophy and Country Party conferences are poor places to go for discussions on foreign affairs, education, defence, industrial relations or the social services[1]. The Country Party, particularly at the Commonwealth level and in all the States except Victoria, has been strongly anti-labor for fear that a Labor Government would include agricultural workers in the arbitration system, would increase land taxes and would favour a leasehold rather than a freehold land system[2]. There is irony in this anti-labor stance since the Country Party is far from being an unabashed 'free-enterprise' party that their allies, whether Nationalist, United Australia Party or Liberals, often claim to be. The Country Party believes in subsidies, guaranteed-prices, producer-controlled marketing schemes, soldier settlement and the maintenance of uneconomic railways, all contrary to the inclinations of the tax-paying business community[3]. In fact, the

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[1]Don Aitkin. "The Australian Country Party", in Australian Politics: A Second Reader, ed. by Henry Mayer (Melbourne: F.W.Cheshire,1969),p.332.

[2]Louise Overacker. Australian Parties in a Changing Society: 1945-67. (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1969), p.243.

[3]James Jupp, Australian Party Politics. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1964), p.171.

principal difference between Country and Australian Labor Party policy, in agricultural affairs, is that the latter are less keen on incentives through taxation concessions[1]. Marketing and regulatory boards are as much a feature of A.L.P. governed states as those states where the Country Party is a part of government. Country Party advocacy of rural road construction and insistence on the keeping open of uneconomic railway lines has been a source of tension with its government partners in Queensland and Western Australia[2].

Subsidies and regulation in general do not lead to consistency in policy. Maxwell Newton[3] describes the Australian pattern of regulation of primary industry as perhaps the most erratic form of regulation in existence. Some products qualify for outright subsidy; others do not. Some qualify for "home consumption price" schemes; others do not. Some qualify for "price stabilisation schemes" based on publicly available "formulae" (wheat); others qualify for "price stabilisation"schemes but the methods used for determining the "cost of production" are shrouded in mystery - this is particularly the case with sugar. The success of the farmer in obtaining this type of government support has encouraged the mineral producer

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[1] James Jupp, Australian Party Politics. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1964), p.173

[2] Ibid.,P.176

[3] Maxwell Newton. "The Economy", in Australian Society : A Sociological Introduction, ed. by A.F. Davies and S. Encel (New York: Atherton Press, 1965). p.244.

and the manufacturer to seek similar benefits. This then leads to the classic producer/consumer confrontation, which we also have in Canada, where it is difficult, if not impossible, to disentangle the interests of consumer as producer and producer as consumer.

The Country Parties in the States and the Commonwealth "survived because of their solid regional and sectional support, the practicality of their strategy, and the shrewdness of their leadership. As members of composite State governments, and by hard bargaining, they won concessions: bounties, special grants, better transport, electric power, telephone and other services for rural communities".[1] Coleman[2] makes the point that it is a characteristic of economic pressure groups, such as the Country Party, that they are politically naive outside their immediate range of economic interests. He cites as an example of this the conflict between the strong anti-communism stand of the party with its enthusiasm for trade with communist China. This may well not be naivete but rather a separation of internal and external policy, which is practised by many parties and governments throughout the world. There is no good reason why trade policy and ideology have to lead to the same goals. It is, however, true to say that the narrowness of Country Party overall policy in securing economic benefits for its supporters is a source of great strength. Not unnaturally

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[1] Overacker, p.264.

[2] Peter Coleman. "The Liberal and Country Parties: Platforms, Policies and Performance", in Forces in Australian Politics, Australian Institute of Political Science (Proceedings 29th Summer School), (Sydney: ANgus & Robertson, 1963), p.13.

the supporters are grateful and perhaps more importantly are much less inclined to switch support to either of the other two major parties, where their interests might be submerged under those of business and the trade unions. This is a basic difference from the British Liberal Party, which does claim a distinctive political philosophy and which does not serve particular interest groups except in terms of general policy.

Coleman's point was rebutted in the discussion of his paper by G.K. Reid[1] who stated that "the Country Party is undoubtedly a minority party and does not aspire to govern in its own right but it serves a vital purpose in Australian politics. It exists to represent the country electorates which in spite of their sparse populations produce at this stage of our development the exports which enable us to grow, even to exist. In the last financial year the entire realisations of our wool and wheat exports only just met import requirements in raw and semi-finished materials for our secondary industries. City dwellers by the very nature of their surroundings and occupations tend to be insulated from the problems of the more remote areas and in their way are probably just as prone as their country cousins to sectional bias. The Country Party has evolved naturally as a result of a steady demand from the electorate. It satisfies this demand and, although its greatest successes have undeniably been the implementation of its particular policies, it has general policies which are also continuously evolving so that the Country Party will be around for a long time yet".

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[1]Coleman, p.23.

Let us consider now first the history of the Federal Country Party and then the history of the various States Country Parties with particular reference to how they became established and have maintained their existence.

The history of the Federal Country Party is remarkably calm and stable. From Page's assumption of leadership in 1921 there have been only five leaders, himself, Cameron, Fadden, McEwen and Anthony. This compares with nine for the other non-Labor party, including two with separate terms and eight for the A.L.P. In the same period the British Liberal Party has had seven leaders, Labour eight and the Conservatives nine. The Party has suffered only one split[1] between Fadden and Page in 1939, and has had only one quarrel with its outside machine when the Victorians expelled John McEwen in 1937.

On the outbreak of the First World War the first outlines of a country party were standing out clearly in New South Wales and Western Australia, were visible in Victoria and indistinct in the other states. The signs then indicated a small party with limited and scattered electoral resources. The 1919 General Election marked the turning point. In the new Parliament a Federal Country Party was formed[2] by eleven old and new members returned by the efforts or under the sponsorship (or at least

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[1] Jupp, p.154.

[2] L.F. Crisp. Australian National Government (Croydon: Longmans, 1963). p.219.

endorsement) of primary producers' organisations such as the Farmers' and Settlers' Associations and the Graziers' Associations. The Country Parties, when first formed, were highly vulnerable;[1] they were regionally based, they often suffered from a shortage of money, and they lacked leaders with parliamentary, as distinct from electoral experience. They were most fortunate, therefore, that their electoral bid was made at a time when the Australian party system was unstable. After 1916, the ALP, except in Queensland, was faced with making good the loss of strength it had suffered during the split over the conscription issue, and the National Party, formed in 1917 under Hughes the ex-Labor leader, was a precarious sectional alliance of free traders and protectionists, liberals, conservatives and ex-Labor men. Earle Page regarded Hughes as a disguised Socialist and spendthrift[2] and was waiting for a suitable time to topple him. Hughes went into the General Election of December 16, 1922 with a majority of one over all other parties combined. He emerged with thirty seats, ALP with twenty-nine, Liberals two and the Country Party fourteen. Page was in a strong position and played his cards well. He refused to serve under Hughes and negotiated with Bruce the terms of a coalition[3] after Bruce was invited to form an administration

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[1] Graham, p.294.

[2] B.D. Graham. "The Country Party and the Formation of the Bruce - Page Ministry". Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand. 10(37) (November 1961), p.73.

[3] Strictly speaking the Government so formed was a "composite ministry" rather than a "coalition" since each party retained its party identify and independence. In Britain the 1931 National Government was not a composite ministry since National Labour and National Liberal soon became indistinguishable from their conservative partners. The wartime coalition government under Winston Churchill, on the other hand, was really a composite ministry with party warfare merely suspended for the duration of hostilities overseas.

on February 3, 1923. The Country Party received five out of the eleven portfolios and agreement that Cabinet division on party lines constituted a negative vote. The Country Party could not repudiate Page's arrangements since this would have precipitated a crisis and possible dissolution.

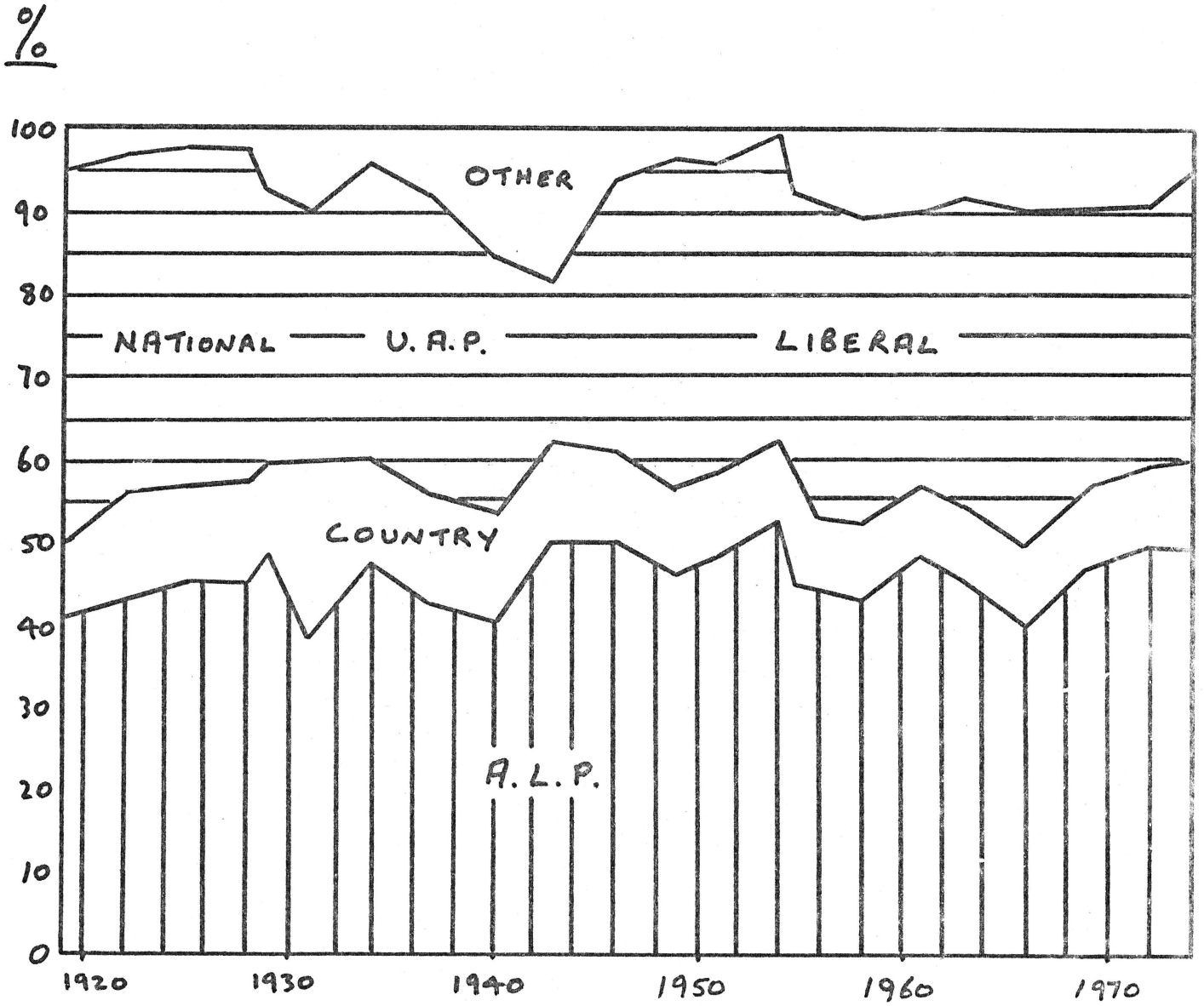
Hughes broke away from the Nationalists in 1929 and the ALP had an unhappy two years in office followed once again by the Labor leader, this time Lyons, breaking away and forming the conservative United Australia Party. In the 1931 General Election the U.A.P. secured an absolute majority of three, in a House of 75 members, and ruled without the Country Party. In 1934 they lost their absolute majority and once again had to share power with Page, but this time the Country Party obtained only four portfolios to ten for theU.A.P. Page's rôle in the collapse of the U.A.P. in 1941 is considered in chapter 9 but from 1941 to 1949 the A.L.P. governed.

In 1949, the A.L.P. was defeated and a Liberal/Country Party government ruled for the next twenty-three years. Country Party representation in the Cabinet and in the total number of Ministers remained steady at around twenty-five percent of the total. This figure was roughly in line with the relative distribution of seats between the Liberals and the Country Party but was out of line with its popular vote since the number of seats obtained by the Country Party was regularly in excess of the number proportional to its popular vote. The percent vote of the main federal parties is shown in figure 1.

Western Australia has the oldest Country Party. In the October 21, 1914 election eight farmers representatives were returned to the fifty

FIGURE 1

PERCENT VOTE BY PARTIES (AUSTRALIA) AT FEDERAL ELECTIONS (1919-1974)



Sources: 1) Official Yearbooks of the Commonwealth of Australia.

2) Keesings Contemporary Archives.

seat Legislative Assembly and subsequently joined together to form the state Country Party. The ALP had a majority of two, but during the 1915/16 recess Labor lost two seats and the Country Party were left holding the balance of power and supported the Liberals in forming a government on 25 July 1916. Monger was the local Country Party leader at this time and in September 1922 he proposed the following principles that a Country Party should follow regarding coalitions, or composite ministries, and the problem of retaining party independence. The six principles can be summarised as follows:

(1) Country Party has right to decide on its relationship with the other parties.

(2) Country Party representation in the Cabinet shall be in proportion to its membership in the Assembly.

(3) A Country Party member should be Deputy Premier if the Premier was from another party.

(4) Where possible, the portfolios directly affecting the primary industries should be held by the Country Party.

(5) The Leader of the Country Party shall have the right to recommend members of his party for the ministerial positions to be filled by Country Party members.

(6) The Country Party should be consulted about all policy matters before legislation was brought before Parliament.

The final point might appear obvious if the principle of Cabinet solidarity is being observed. However, its importance to the Country Party

lay in the possibilities for dealing and horse-trading with their government partners in order to get Country Party proposed legislation adopted.

The history of Western Australian government has been alternating periods of ALP and Liberal/Nationalist/Country Party composite government rule. The February 1971 General Election gave the ALP a majority of one in a 51 seat assembly, ending twelve years of Liberal/Country Party domination. In January 1974 the National Alliance was formed as a result of a merge between the Western Australian Country Party and the W.A. Democratic Labor Party. At the March 30,1974 General Election the Labor Government was defeated and the Liberal/National Alliance secured a majority of seven.

The history of the Country Party in Victoria is much more varied and has involved several splits in the Party. In over fifty-five years of separate existence, it has served in coalition for only brief periods. Otherwise it has preferred to give its support to governments formed from either of the other parties, or to rule with their support[1].

In 1917 five members of the Victorian Farmers' Union were returned to the State Parliament, increased to thirteen in the 1920 election out of an Assembly of sixty-five. The Nationalists did not secure a clear majority at this election nor at another General Election a year later when they captured 31 seats to 21 for the A.L.P., twelve for the now Country Party (formerly V.F.U.) and one independent Labor. This led, September 7, 1923

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[1]Jupp, p.149.

to the formation of a coalition government under Lawson, the Nationalist leader and John Allan, the Country Party leader. The cabinet that was formed contained seven Nationalists and five Country Party members. However, support within the V.F.U. for the Nationalists was lukewarm and the Nationalists lost eleven seats in the 1924 election. On 16 July, 1924 Michael Prendergast formed a minority Labor government. The Nationalists were alarmed at the prospects of increased taxation to such an extent that they agreed four months later to the Country Party terms which led to Allan becoming Premier, with six other Country Party members in the Cabinet. This meant that just over half the entire Country Party caucus was in the Cabinet. Remarkably this Government survived until the next general election, but not before both the Country Party was split by Albert Dunstan and the V.F.U. also split.

At the 1927 election the Country Party retained ten seats and Dunstan's Country Progressive Party four. The Government coalition had 27 seats to the A.L.P.'s 28 and there were in addition two Liberals and four independents. The opportunities for Dunstan were enormous and he used them. First, he supported Hogan to permit him to form a Labor Government but switched his support a year later in opposition to an electoral redistribution bill that would have reduced rural representation. The 1929 election left the picture more or less the same and Dunstan switched his support back to Hogan. In 1930 Allan and the official Country Party merged with Dunstan's group to form the Victorian Country Party and to complete the confusion Hogan himself left the A.L.P. and joined Dunstan's refurbished Victorian Country Party.

In the early years of the depression the Victorian Country Party joined with the U.A.P. in a State coalition but finally, in 1935, Dunstan formed a Country Party Government of his own, with Labor support and maintained this until 1943 - a record term for a Victorian Premier at that time.

Under Dunstan's influence the Victorian Country Party was hostile to the U.A.P. and it carried this to the extreme in attempting to force its Federal parliamentarians out of supporting the Lyons-Page government. It was this that led to John McEwen leaving in 1937 to form a Liberal Country Party on the basis of support for the Federal coalition[1]. This faction did not rejoin the State organisation until 1943, and then only after acrimonious debates.

From 1943 to 1945 Dunstan headed a Country Party/U.A.P. coalition and again in 1950 the Country Party was once more in office with Labor support. 1955 saw the start of the long Liberal party rule of Henry Bolte.

The Country Party in New South Wales evolved from the Progressive Party which was an attempted amalgamation of rural and metropolitan interests, and which secured fifteen seats (out of ninety) in the 1920 general election. This election was held under proportional representation. After the election the party split over the issue of coalition with the Nationalists. Seven Progressive M.L.A.'s, all from the country, led by Bruxner broke away. They had the support of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association. The other half, including the metropolitan representatives, had the support of the Graziers

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[1] Jupp, p.149.

Association and in 1922 joined a Nationalist led coalition. In 1925 Bruxner's group formally adopted the name 'Country Party'. Its geographic base was firmly established in New England and the Riverina. The Country Party entered a coalition with the Nationalists in 1927 and received four Cabinet posts compared to ten for Bavin's Nationalists. Lang returned to power briefly from 1930 to 1932 but then a U.A.P./Country Party coalition governed until 1941, which saw the start of a twenty-four year long period of Labor rule. Since 1965, however, there has been a Liberal/Country Party coalition government with narrow majorities, Country Party having six Cabinet posts compared to thirteen for the Liberals. In New South Wales, the Country Party has been very conservative, so much so that many farmers transferred their support to the A.L.P.[1].

The only other State where the Country Party is strong is Queensland. The Country Party elected five members to the Legislature in 1915 and achieved little in the following ten years. In November 1925 the party merged with the United Party to form the Country and Progressive National Party which enjoyed one term in power after the 1929 election before the A.L.P. started a quarter of a century rule. The A.L.P. in Queensland broke up in the mid-fifties into a A.L.P., a Queensland Labor Party and a North Queensland Labor Party. A Country Party/Liberal Party coalition took office in 1957 and has remained in power since with the Country Party as the dominant partner providing the Premier. The extent to which the coalition

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[1] Graham, p.240.

and in particular the Country Party, owe their success to gerry-mandering is considered in chapter 8. Suffice it to say that in the 1969 election (in a 78 seat legislature) the Country Party won 26 seats with 21 percent of the vote but the Liberals won only 19 seats with 23.7 percent of the vote[1]; the A.L.P. got 40 percent of the vote and 31 seats[2], which was an accurate reflection of their vote.

In 1919, the Country Party in South Australia had eleven seats in a 75 seat legislature. Their strength slowly declined in the twenties and they were under constant pressure to merge with the Liberals. This pressure was reinforced in 1929 by changes to the electoral act. Two member constituencies were retained but the whole of an elected candidate's preference votes were distributed at their full value, thereby ensuring that the party whose candidates polled the highest number of primary votes would secure all the seats in a given electorate and not a share proportionate with their vote. In June 1932 the Country and Liberal Parties merged to form the Liberal and Country League which then proceeded to dominate state politics, including the quarter century reign of Sir Thomas Playford. The ALP finally achieved office in 1965, lost in 1968, but won comfortably in 1970.

Finally, Tasmania where the Country Party has been of little significance. Some Country Party members were elected in the early twenties.

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[1] James Kelly. "Vote Weightage and Quota Gerrymanders in Queensland, 1931-1971". The Australian Quarterly. 43(2), (June 1971), pp.39-54.

[2] Albinski, p.281.

There has been a slight revival in recent years with the formation of the Centre Party, which elected two members in 1959. However, the thirty-five years of Labor rule did not come to an end until 1969 when the A.L.P. and Liberals each elected seventeen members and Kevin Lyons, the son of a former State Labor Premier, was elected for the Centre Party. Bethune, the Liberal leader, became Premier with Lyons support. However, the government did not survive a full term (five years in Tasmania) and Labor returned to power in 1972 and Lyons lost his seat. It has been argued[1] that the reason for Country Party weakness in Tasmania is that the State is the least industrialised, and that the capital city, Hobart, is not a major commercial centre. Hence both the Liberals and the A.L.P. cater closely to rural interests.

In summary therefore what has the Country Party achieved in terms of electoral success and government power? The original adoption of the coalition strategy involved both an alliance with the National Party and a declaration of war on the A.L.P.; in other words an admission that the Country Party did not aspire to major party status[2]. At the Federal level the Country Party has been successful in seeing many of its policies for the benefit of rural interests, implemented. Although polling around nine percent of the national vote (in a relatively limited number of contests) it managed in the mid-sixties to elect 20 members to the House of Representatives, six to eight Senators and hold a quarter of the Cabinet posts.

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[1] Albinski, p.206

[2] Graham, p.196.

It is the dominant partner in the Queensland government and a junior member of the governments of N.S.W. and Western Australia.

It has achieved this by concentrating on a narrow range of economic goals. The limited objectives of the party and its narrow range of policies make it unlikely that factionalism and internal party strife will develop[1]. The only state where factionalism has occurred is Victoria, where the party has split twice. However, in Victoria the party tended to be more radical and local politics, in general, more volatile. The U.A.P./ Liberals in Victoria have also split twice, the A.L.P. once and the Communists once[2]. The appearance of the Democratic Labor Party in 1955 has made matters worse for the A.L.P., who have achieved less relatively at elections, both Federal and State, in Victoria than any other State[3].

One can criticise the Country Party for its narrowness. If the purpose of politics is to see who gets what, how and when then the Country Party has been outstandingly successful in ensuring good representation of the views of its supporters and in meeting their needs over the past half-century. It will be interesting to compare the extent to which the British Liberal Party has been able to do the same.

The Country Party has many positive achievments to its credit

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[1] Aitkin, p.333.

[2] D.W. Rawson. "Victoria 1910-1966: Out of Step, or Merely Shuffling?". Historical Studies. 13(49) (October 1967), p.61.

[3] Ibid.,p.62.

including improved road, rail and air services particularly in rural areas and in broadcasting; the growth of the central banking system and the launching of the Development Bank; the initiation of the Australian Loan Council on a voluntary basis; the creation of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and the introduction of a National Health Plan. Because it has often held the balance of power it has also been able to block legislation it regarded as hostile to its interests, particularly in the area of tariffs and currency revaluation. It certainly appears doubtful if the interests of rural Australia would have been as well served by either the A.L.P. or the Liberal Party and its predecessors if the Country Party had never existed.

CHAPTER 4

HISTORY OF THE BRITISH LIBERAL PARTY

A commonly held view is to regard the British Liberal Party as a Centre Party with policies midway between those of the Labour and Conservative Parties. This can be misleading and if true would have eliminated Liberal support long ago. Because of the closeness of the vote between Labour and Conservative - even in the 1945 Labour landslide they received only eight percent more of the total vote than the Conservatives - both the major parties woo the centre. Liberal activists do not see themselves as a centre party but see the Liberal Party at one end of a spectrum (the individualist end) with both the Conservatives and Labour grouped together at the other (collectivist) end[1]. Butler and Stokes found that, in the summer of 1963, fully a third of Labour supporters preferred the Conservatives to Liberals as a second choice and among Conservatives more than a quarter preferred Labour to the Liberals[2]. Given the extent of the class and basic policy differences between Labour and Conservatives this supports the view that a significant number of Labour and Conservative supporters prefer the collectivist authoritarian aspect of their parties to the more radical individualism of the Liberal Party. Radical is used

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[1] Arthur Cyr, "Class in Britain through Liberal Eyes". Comparative Politics. 5(1972-1973), p.79.

[2] David Butler and Donald Stokes, Political Change in Britain (London: Macmillan, 1969), p.203.

here in its literal sense of "getting to the roots" and is, and always has been, of the greatest value to the Liberal movement[1]. The question of whether the future of the Liberal Party lies in being a Radical Party or a Centre reform party is at the root of most Liberal policy discussions. J.M. Keynes summed up the latter position very aptly as Liberals deciding whether they consider themselves to be the 'best type' of Conservative Free Traders (on the left of the Conservative Party), or 'the best type' of Socialistic Reformers (on the right of the Labour Party)[2]. In the twenties and thirties there were many defections from the Liberal Party to both Labour and Conservatives. In more recent times Labour politicians such as Desmond Donnelly, Woodrow Wyatt and Christopher Mayhew give more signs of being at home in the Liberal Party as do Conservatives such as Sir Edward Boyle.

There is still a very definite need for a radical party in Britain and the Labour Party certainly is not radical. It has been estimated that in 1911, 5 percent of the population owned 87 percent of private wealth. Fifty years later 5 percent still owned 75 percent while the trend towards redistribution of wealth was actually greater before the thirties than after[3]. The Labour record on law reform in such areas as divorce, treatment of

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[1] Lord Wade. Our Aim and Purpose-Liberalism. (London: Liberal Central Association, 1968), p.4.

[2] J.M. Keynes. "Am I a Liberal?". An address to the Liberal Summer School at Cambridge, 1925, in The Liberal Tradition: From Fox to Keynes, ed. by Alan Bullock & Maurice Shock (London: Adam and Charles Block, 1956), p.284.

[3] Jim Cousins. The Left and the Liberals. (London: New Orbits Group, 1969), p.27.

homosexuals, abortion and equal rights is, if anything, even poorer than the Conservatives. Labour educational policy is a levelling down process, whilst the Liberals, with similar ultimate goals, propose steps that are a levelling up process. There is an old adage about Socialists that they can be divided into two groups, those who are motivated by ideals of social reform and those who are motivated by envy. One of the many tragedies of British politics is that the Labour Party, under Harold Wilson, mainly seems to follow the latter path. To read the "New Statesman" and the "Sunday Telegraph" is to follow replays of the class war and denunciations of all unions that are the curse of present day British politics. The British have a millstone round their neck labelled "class consciousness" to such an extent that the fact that the Liberal Party does not evoke any class images in the minds of the electors can be seen as one of the "difficulties" of the Liberal Party by Blondel[1]. Liberal supporters are very "anti" the class concept, which is widely accepted by both Labour and Conservative supporters[2]. In fact there is a strong impression that the Liberal Party is a haven for "people who are highly individualistic and correspondingly hostile to the political and sociological communalism of the major parties"[3]. This could partially explain the difficulties of efficiently operating the Liberal Party, conversely the Conservative and Labour Party managers may feel they are more fortunate in having a higher proportion of politically

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[1]J. Blondel. Voters, Parties, and Leaders: The Social Fabric of British Politics (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963), p.83.

[2]Cyr, pp.80-81.

[3]Ibid.,p.77.

docile sheep. Liberals are much more likely than major-party supporters to say that both business and the trade unions alike have too much power[1].

The growth of the power of the State is a real concern to the Liberal Party. Grimond wrote that he believed that the concentration of economic power in the hands of the State is a threat to Freedom and Liberalism and that property is a bulwark against tyranny if spread sufficiently widely[2]. He continues: "for Liberals, therefore, the Free Enterprise system associated with private property seems the best instrument to hand and they intend to make it work in a liberal fashion"[3]. It is because of these basic Liberal policies of free enterprise and the merits of private property that any union between the Liberal and Labour Parties is out of the question.

Given the basic concern of Liberals that the Conservative Party is basically a reactionary party, that occasionally and for its own convenience wears reformist sheep's clothing, there could be no long term union between Liberals and Conservatives. Sir William Beveridge, in his summary of Full Employment in a Free Society (1944) wrote that "the policy of full employment proposed here is a policy of socialising demand rather than production .... it makes possible the retention of private enterprise to discover and develop the best technical methods of production, so long as private enterprise

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[1] Butler and Stokes, p.323.

[2] Joseph Grimond, The Liberal Future. (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), p.60.

[3] Ibid, p.60.

appears to be the most efficient agency for that purpose. At the same time, it does not block the way to socialisation of production in general or in any particular industry"[1]. This is a far sounder approach to the question of nationalisation than the "on again/off again" see-saw on steel nationalisation by successive Labour and Conservative Governments or the present proposals, so fervently espoused by Wedgwood Benn, to nationalise anything big whether it be a chemical company or a brewery.

In the face of over fifty years wandering in the political wilderness why does the Liberal Party still exist in Britain and at any rate thrive in many people's minds even if not in terms of parliamentary seats. Francis Boyd sums up the basic reason as follows: "the central position of the party is that the Liberal witness is needed now more than ever because the forces of illiberalism are gaining strength everywhere; that the existence of an independent, autonomous Liberal party is essential if the Liberal witness is to be declared faithfully; that strong representation in Parliament must be sought because only in such a forum can the priorities between competing social causes be fairly settled; and that community action is to be developed provided that Liberals take part as members of an independent party"[2].

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[1] Sir William Beveridge. "Full Employment in a Free Society", in The Liberal Tradition: From Fox to Keynes. ed. by Alan Bullock & Maurice Shock (London: Adam and Charles Block, 1956), p.266.

[2] Francis Boyd, "Eastbourne - and Afterwards". Contemporary Review, 217 (1258), (November 1970), pp.260-261.

What then are the distinctive Liberal policies that give validity to its claim to be an independent party. The Liberal Party General Election Manifesto was published on February 13, 1974 . Its policy on federalism is discussed more fully in chapter 7, and on electoral reform in chapter 8. The Liberal Party would scrap Maplin (the proposed new London Airport), severely curtail the Concorde and make the Channel Tunnel rail only. The Liberals would introduce a national minimum wage - in Britain, this is too radical for the Labour Party to espouse. They would introduce a negative income tax[1]. However, the most distinctive other policy relates to Liberal industrial policy, which has three objectives:

(1) Employees must become members of their companies just as shareholders are with the same clearly defined rights.

(2) It must be accepted that directors in public companies are equally responsible to shareholders and employees. Employees should be entitled to share in the election of the directors on equal terms with shareholders, and works councils representing all employees must be set up at plant level with wide powers to negotiate pay and conditions of work.

(3) Employees should share in the profits of the company and the growth of its assets.

In the long term, the implementation of Liberal co-partnership policies will contribute to the solution of wage inflation by ensuring that

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[1]Liberal Research Department. The Way Ahead. (London: Liberal Publication Department, 1970), p.98.

all employees benefit from wage increases and by including a measure of responsibility into wage bargaining.

The basic purpose of the Liberal co-partnership proposals is that they stress the community of interests among those taking part in production and emphasise joint responsibility[1].

Various co-partnership schemes have been tried though some are little more than share-offering schemes without any real involvment of the work force. Cyr cites[2] as examples of the failure of co-partnership ICI and Rolls Royce experience. Imperial Chemical Industries started a scheme in 1954 but by 1970 only 40 percent of the stock distributed as a bonus to the workers had been retained. For Rolls Royce the percentage of workers holding workers' shares dropped in half between 1964 and 1968. The Liberals claim beneficial results at Glacier Metal, Avimo, Conder International, Norwich Union Insurance Group, Texas Instruments and Phillips and cite West German and Yugoslav experience, in a somewhat different setting, in support[3].

Given the disasters of Conservative industrial relations policy and Labour's surrender to the big unions (but not necessarily to the small ones), Liberal policy does offer a genuine radical solution, which is not the same thing as offering an easy or an opportunistic answer. Liberal policy

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[1] Grimond, p.80.

[2] Cyr, pp.69-70.

[3] Peter McGregor and Gordon Lishman. "Participation in a Competitive Economy". Liberal Focus. No. 3 (London: Liberal Publication Department, 1969), pp.1-24.

towards the unions is a delicate issue. By and large Liberals recognise the benefits that trade unionism has brought to the working man. However, this positive recognition is tempered by concern at the effect on individual rights and liberties of the closed shop, union 'disciplinary' actions and picket line violence. Watkins refers disparagingly to the trickle of Liberals in the "direction of the extreme laissez-faire Right, as represented by Mr. Edward Martell's union-busting People's League for the Defence of Freedom"[1]. Watkins himself seems to have fallen for union propaganda on this topic. The League's concern was that all individuals were entitled to the protection of the law and that the fact of being a member of a strong union did not grant you immunity to assault and injure someone else who disagreed with you. Such a view is not symptomatic of the extreme Right but of basic liberal values. The fact that these values are widely flouted wherever there are powerful trade unions does not make the values wrong;it is merely a recognition that most non-liberal political parties recognise "might is right" when their own direct interests are threatened.

Liberal policy on Rhodesia has been the perfectly straightforward one that Ian Smith is a rebel and that British Governments who refuse to treat him as such, because he is white, when black revolts were crushed with force, are hypocritical at best and cowardly at worst. This attitude is labelled extreme Left when in actuality it is the only policy that truly recognises the plight of the black majority in Rhodesia. Although it has

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[1]Blondel, p.86.

often been Labour policy to try to identify the Liberals with the Conservatives, Rhodesia is certainly one area where Liberals and Conservatives are poles apart. The Liberals should have no need to apologise for their defence of individual freedom. Blondel quotes[1] Dr. Eysenck's hypothesis on the relationship between conservative/radical attitudes and 'tender minded'/'tough minded' attitudes particularly towards the use of force in politics. This indicated that Liberals were the most 'tender-minded' of all - compared to Labour, Conservatives and Communists. This is nothing the Liberals need be ashamed of, but it would be a mistake for their opponents to equate "tender-mindedness" with a willingness to tolerate injustice. Labour and Conservative alike are far more willing to tolerate injustice, as exampled above, in the name of political expediency which, given the nature of politics, is maybe one reason they achieve power and the Liberals do not.

Finally, in the consideration of Liberal policy, it must be recognised that the party does not cater to any particular sectional interest and, conversely, that no economically powerful pressure group is willing to act as the patron of the party[2].

It is not intended to give a detailed history of the Liberal party, its leaders and its fortunes since a relatively large number of books have been published on these topics compared to the history of the Australian

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[1] Blondel, p.86.

[2] Lowell G. Norman. "The Decline of the Liberal Party in British Politics". Journal of Politics, 16(1) (February 1954), p.37.

Country Party. In his history of the Liberal Party Douglas attributed[1] the decline of the party not to "the inescapable logic of history, or the inapplicability of Liberal remedies to the issues of the day, but to avoidable mistakes made by Liberals themselves. What failed was not Liberalism but Liberals". This thesis was expanded by Taylor[2] who summarised the four principal Liberal mistakes as follows:

(1) Liberal/Labour electoral pact of 1903 which gave Labour significant parliamentary representation but was of little benefit to the Liberals.

(2) The split in the Liberal Party dating from Asquith's resignation in 1916 and leading to the electoral pact between the Lloyd George Liberals and the Conservatives.

(3) The failure of the Liberals to form the Government in 1923.

(4) The despair of the Liberal leaders after the 1929 election and their resulting failure to act as an independent party.

The Liberal/Labour electoral pact of 1903 may well have benefitted Labour more than the Liberals but in itself would not have been fatal to the Liberal Party. The Asquith/Lloyd George split was far more serious. Innumerable books have been written from every conceivable angle on this

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[1] Roy Douglas. History of the Liberal Party, 1895-1970. (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1971), p.3.

[2] Alan H. Taylor. "The Effect of Electoral Pacts on the Decline of the Liberal Party". British Journal of Political Science. 3(2) (April 1973), p.243.

topic with the extremes in viewpoint ranging from it being a dastardly piece of treachery on the part of Lloyd George all the way through to it being Lloyd George saving the nation from a disastrous negotiated peace on the lines of the Lansdowne memorandum. Like most significant events that involve people there is probably a little bit of truth at both ends and a great deal more somewhere in the middle. The Maurice affair cast great shadows of suspicion on Lloyd George's integrity. On the other hand Lloyd George is rightly remembered as one of Britain's three greatest war Ministers - with the elder Pitt and Winston Churchill. Asquith in his own way was a great prime minister, but unsuited to war. Unfortunately for the Liberal Party it was the Conservative Party that reaped the recognition of concluding a victorious war even if few people at the time realised how much the world would soon change for the worse under the twin evils of Communism and Fascism and particularly Stalinism and Hitlerism.

However, it is very debatable whether it was either necessary or wise for Lloyd George to support the 'coupon' election. Douglas argues that the arrangements for the election were being considered as early as January 1918[1], when the real issue in the election would have been whether to fight on or to attempt a negotiated peace with Germany, and that after the armistice Lloyd George could and should have fought the election as a Liberal without Conservative support and resolved his problems with Asquith afterwards.

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[1]Roy Douglas. "The Background to the 'Coupon' Election Arrangements", The English Historical Review. LXXVI(339), (April 1971), p.324.

Trevor Wilson[1], on the other hand, felt that Lloyd George considered the Liberal Party to be finished and that his best chance of continued power lay in receiving the support of the Conservatives. It must be remembered that in those days party "switching" was not necessarily political suicide as evidenced by the examples of Joseph Chamberlain and Winston Churchill. The old adage about the dangers of riding a tiger - if you should happen to fall off - also applies. Lloyd George had the support of only one third of the Liberals, the remainder supported Asquith or were ambivalent. 364 Conservatives and 159 Liberals received the coupon. It could be asked why Lloyd George did not try to get the coupon for more Liberals but it is probable that he got as many as he could expect.

In the jingo atmosphere immediately after the war the Conservatives would probably have won anyway. The Asquith Liberals were blamed for the early defeats in the war and Asquith himself was defeated by an undistinguished and uncouponed Conservative[2]. It can be argued that Lloyd George's purpose was to safeguard a certain number of Liberal seats, but if he had thrown his mantle over all the Liberals they would have probably won as many seats as they did divided, but with immeasurably better prospects of reuniting and rapidly reviving.

The actual result was very different. The forming of electoral

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[1]Trevor Wilson. "The Coupon and the British General Election of 1918". The Journal of Modern History, XXXVI(1) (March 1964), pp.28-42.

[2]Ibid.,p.40.

pacts was the main cause[1] of the Liberals losing "major status", that is finishing first or second, which in turn led to loss of credibility as a party and hence accelerated the loss of major status elsewhere. The real weakness[2] of the Lloyd George coalition was of the very nature of all truly coalition arrangements. Before the coalition fell Conservatives were almost as ready to damn it for being too Liberal as the Liberals were to damn it for being too Conservative. In any political party, the mainspring of activity comes from the enthusiasts and these are the very people most easily disgruntled by those compromises with the traditional "enemy" that a coalition necessarily entails.

Asquith's leadership of the Independent Liberals in the early twenties was uninspiring and he gave little evidence of having any new policies to cope with the problems of reconstruction[3]. The Liberals could have formed a minority government in 1923 and demonstrated that they still had the capacity and ability to govern and, as Canadian experience has demonstrated, minority government by a "middle" party is not necessarily bad government.

Splits tend to breed splits and the demoralisation of the Liberals in 1929 was compounded by the defection of Simon in 1931[4].
It was to be more than thirty years before the Liberals polled more

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[1] Taylor, p.245.

[2] Douglas. "History of the Liberal Party", p.296.

[3] Trevor Wilson. The Downfall of the Liberal Party, 1914-1935. (London: Collins, The Fontana Library, 1968), pp.225 and 253.

[4] Douglas. "History of the Liberal Party"., pp.211-223 fully describe this episode.

than ten percent of the national vote. Samuel, Sinclair and Davies were decent men but uninspiring. It was not until Joseph Grimond became Liberal leader in 1956 that Liberals could start to lift their heads. Liberal by-election successes at Torrington in 1958 and Orpington in 1962 breathed life into the party. Jeremy Thorpe took over the leadership in 1967 and brought the Liberal General Election vote in 1974 to past the six million mark for the first time since before the first World War. The principal Liberal Party problem in these more recent years has been to define policy and parliamentary tactics. The general public can well become confused when in a typical Commons session (1964/65) out of 170 divisions the Liberals voted with the Labour Government, which had an overall majority of only four, on 41 occasions; against it on 95; abstained 3 times and permitted a free vote of Liberal M.P.'s 31 times. However, if Liberals are to be true to their own policy such differences are natural and inevitable.

Rasmussen considered that an index to Liberal strength is its success in recruiting parliamentary candidates and whether the party is kept going by faithful old members or whether new members are coming into the party to give it vitality. 1950 was a low point for the Liberals but since then the Party has been able to attract new candidates and to retain a good portion of those who had stood before. For example, of those who stood for the first time in 1955, 46 percent (N = 26) stood again, but of experienced Liberal candidates, who stood in 1955, 64 percent (N = 34) stood again[1]. One major problem in the early fifties in both recruiting candidates

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[1] J. Rasmussen. "The Implications of the Potential Strength of the Liberal Party for the Future of British Politics". Parliamentary Affairs. XIV(3) (Summer 1961), pp.368-392.

and conducting election campaigns was finance. One of Grimond's major successes in revitalising the Party was to restore its finances to a reasonable level, though obviously far short in total of the amounts available to Labour from levies on trade union members and to the Conservatives from business. In the five years before the 1964 General Election the Liberal Associations, at the constituency level, probably raised and spent an average of 225,000 pounds annually in the five years prior to 1964 rising to 300,000 pounds in 1964. In that election the average expenditure per Liberal candidate was just over six hundred pounds[1] compared to 930 pounds per Labour candidate[2]. However, it was the financing of Liberal Headquarters that posed the most serious problem. Although headquarters income rose from 23,500 pounds in 1959 to 83,000 pounds in 1964[3] this was far below Transport House (Labour) at 325,000 pounds and the Conservative Central Office at over one million pounds[4].

What have the Liberals achieved electorally and what effect have they had on British political life? Roberts sums up the latter point well in his comments that "the Liberal Party, in the post-war years, has been more of a source of critical challenge to the orthodoxies of the two main parties, and an originator of exciting policy ideas (entry into Europe,

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[1]Richard Rose. Influencing Voters. London: Faber & Faber, 1967), p.269.

[2]Ibid.,p.259.

[3]Ibid.,p.270

[4]Ibid.,p.261.

co-partnership schemes in industry, elected regional authorities, and so forth) than a challenge to the power of Labour or the Conservatives"[1]. Lord Wade lays emphasis on the fact that "Liberals reject the whole concept of politics based on class war. This concept they regard as out-of-date and illiberal. Liberals reject the idea of a privileged class or race claiming to possess a special right or aptitude to govern and enjoying favoured treatment as its reward. Liberals are opposed to a party structure whereby one party relies primarily on the support of employers and the other primarily on the support of employees"[2].

For people who believe strongly that there is that much difference between Liberals and both Labour and Conservatives then a major by-election upset victory can be the cause of ecstatic rejoicing. Lady Violet Bonham Carter's reaction after her son's victory for the Liberals at Torrington in 1958 is highly exaggerated but indicative of Liberal feelings. She is quoted as saying "I had the strange sense of being a member of an army of liberation entering occupied country which for years had been ruled by Quislings and collaborators and that their day was over once and for all. There are in England thousands of Liberals living in occupied territory whom we have got to liberate"[3].

Figure 2 shows the fluctuations in party strengths since 1918 in terms of voter percentage at general elections. Of greater significance for

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[1] Geoffrey K. Roberts. Political Parties and Pressure-Groups in Britain. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970), p.185.

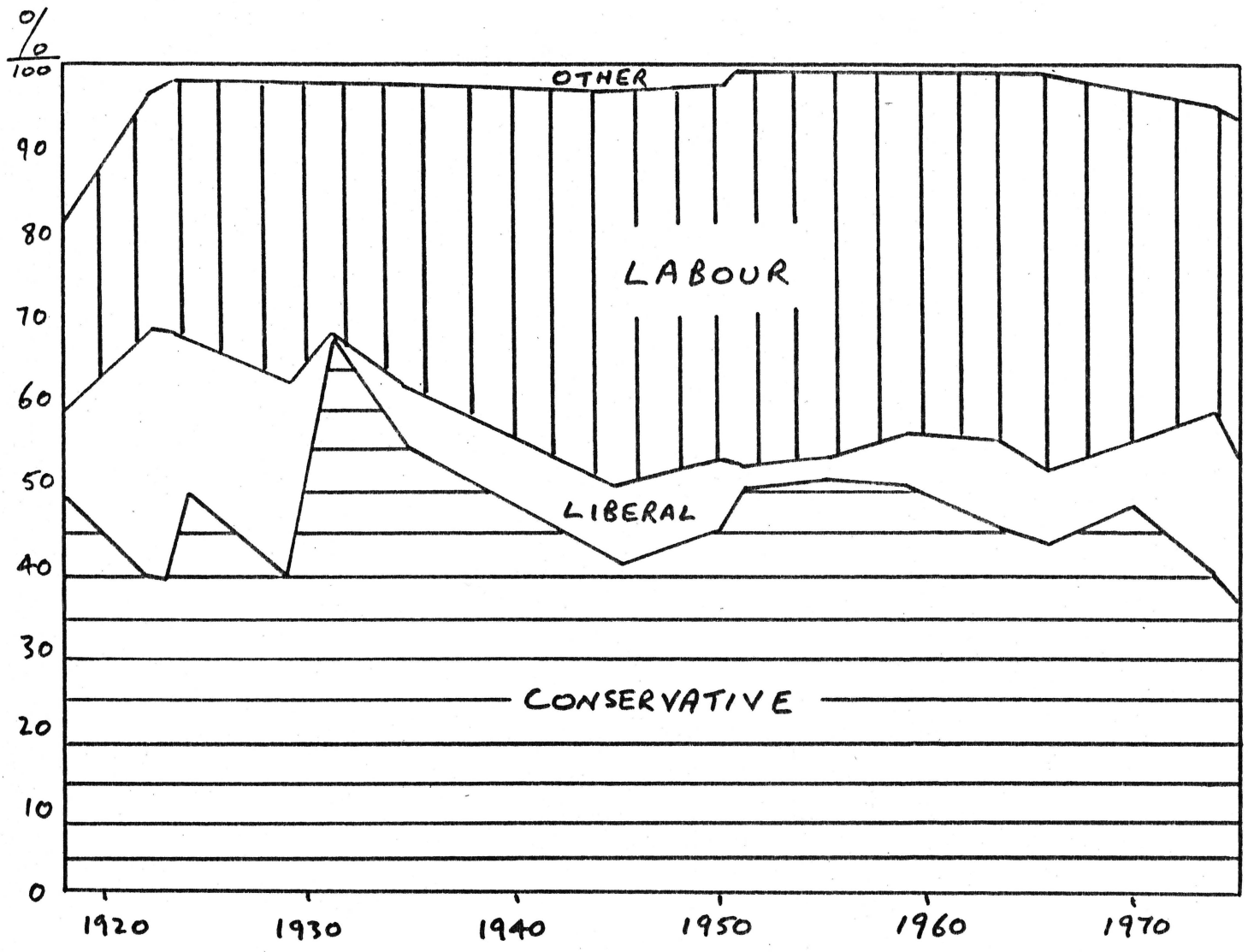
[2] Wade, p.5

[3] Watkins, p.89 quoting from the 'Daily Express' 23 February 1958.

FIGURE 2

PERCENT VOTE BY PARTIES (U.K.)

AT GENERAL ELECTIONS 1918 - 1974



Sources: 1) D.E. Butler & J. Freeman. British Political Facts, 1900-1967 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1968).

2) The Times. Election Summaries (1970, 1974).

the Liberal Party is how these votes were reflected in seats in the House of Commons compared to the number of seats proportional directly to their vote. This is shown in table 4 together with an "Index of Underrepresentation" which is the number of seats directly proportional to the vote divided by the number of seats actually won.

Table 4

Seats Won by Liberal Party at General Elections 1918-1974

Year	Seats Won	Seats Proportional to Vote	Index of Underrepresentation
1918	165[1]	171	1.04
1922	116[1]	179	1.54
1923	158	182	1.15
1924	40	108	2.70
1929	59	144	2.44
1931	35[2]	38	1.09
1935	21	39	1.86
1945	12	58	4.83
1950	9	57	6.33
1951	6	16	2.67
1955	6	17	2.83
1959	6	37	6.17
1964	9	71	7.89
1966	12	54	4.50
1970	6	47	7.83
1974 (February)	14	122	8.73
1974 (October)	13	116	8.95

Liberals have recently done relatively better in local elections than in parliamentary elections. In the May 1973 metropolitan district

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[1] 1918 and 1922 Results are for the Independent Liberals and Coalition Liberals Combined.

[2] 1935 Results are for the Samuel and Lloyd George Liberals Combined but excluding the Simon (National) Liberals.

elections they became the largest party in Liverpool with 48 seats to Labour's 42 and the nine Conservatives. In Leeds they hold the balance of power with Labour holding 44, the Conservatives 38 and the Liberals 14. In the non-metropolitan District Council elections in June 1973 the relative party strengths were:

Labour	4,327
Conservative	4,286
Liberal	919
Independent	3,534
Others	449

Most of the Independents, if they had a party label, would be Conservative or Liberal with very few Labour. The Liberals won control of Eastbourne and hold the balance at Bath, Exeter and York. An interesting result was at Lincoln where Dick Taverne's Democratic Labour supporters won control of the local council returning 20 members compared to only one for the official Labour Party.

Not surprisingly it has been found that potential Liberal supporters are increasingly likely not to vote Liberal the less likely they think a Liberal might come to winning[1]. If this is the case then a change in the electoral system might well benefit the Liberals who suffer from the "wasted vote" propaganda of the two major parties at present.

Some other observations on Liberal election results are not quite so obvious. Watkins claims[2] that the Liberals make the most progress under

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[1] Butler and Stokes, p.327.

[2] Watkins, p.148

an unpopular Conservative Government and that Conservative supporters who are dissatisfied with their government vote Liberal but that Labour supporters in like case tend to abstain. Taylor on the other hand claims[1] that "like the major parties, the Liberals declined most where they were strongest. The size of their advances was unrelated to their previous strength. They advanced most where they were already strongest, presumably due to their serious hopes of victory but least where their strength was intermediate". This is probably more a reflection of their lack of unique class identity which is then not reflected in a class divided system.

The Liberals have often been accused of being the archtype'floating voters'. Cyr strongly disputes this and claims that the voter flow to and from the Liberals, in the period 1963-1966, was found to be Labour-Liberal-Labour and Conservative-Liberal-Conservative, not Labour-Liberal-Conservative or the reverse[2]. This supports the theory of the uniqueness of the Liberal Party and that it is not just a centre party. Finally, even the strongest Liberal supporters are overcome by views of impending doom as exampled by Lord Ogmore, who was President of the Liberal Party in 1963-1964, writing after the 1970 General Election "never again is it likely that we shall see 333 Liberal candidates taking the field in a general election with scores of lost deposits to follow"[3]. Four years later the Liberal Party fielded

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[1] A.H. Taylor. "The Proportional Decline Hypothesis in English Elections". Journal of the Royal Statistical Society. Series A (General), 135(3), (1972), p.368.

[2] Cyr, p.66.

[3] Lord Ogmore. "The Liberal Party - What Now?". Contemporary Review. 217(1256) (September 1970), p.122.

517 candidates in February 1974 and over six hundred in October, the largest numbers for over sixty years, and lost fewer deposits in the February 1974 General Election than did the Labour Party.

The Liberal Party today is heir to an honoured past and offers the prospect of radical new policies. Its future electoral success is still questionable.

CHAPTER 5

SOURCES OF SUPPORT

The electoral success, or otherwise, of a party depends on many factors - its policies, leaders, organisation; the rival parties; internal and external economic, social and political factors; the electoral system and the sources of its support. A "pressure group" or "interest" group" type of party will tend to maintain its stability, other factors remaining unchanged, as long as the reason for exerting pressure or pursuing a special interest remains. The danger signals in this case may well be its own success in achieving its supporters' goals, unless it can either find further similar goals or convince its supporters that their continued support is vital in order to hold what they have gained. Another basic type of party is the "ideological" party which is primarily concerned in promoting its ideas or political philosophy. A third group, and possibly the most common, is a mixture, in varying proportions of the first two. On this scale we could construct a rank order from 'strongly' pressure group to strongly 'ideological' which would look something like this for the principal Australian and British Parties.

Strongly 'Pressure' or 'Interest Group'	Country Party
	Scottish National Party (S.N.P.)
	Plaid Cymru
	Australian Labor Party (A.L.P.)
	Labour Party
	Democratic Labour Party (D.L.P.)
	Australian Liberal Party
	Conservative Party
Strongly 'Ideological'	British Liberal Party

The gap is deliberate since it is suggested that the British Liberal Party is the most clearly neither a pressure group nor an interest group but is strongly 'ideological' compared to the other parties and that the Country Party in Australia is the most strongly 'pressure group' oriented. The Scottish National Party is obviously a strong 'interest group' based on a particular region. The two main labour parties, because of their dependence on and close links with the trade union movement in the two countries, are more 'pressure' group motivated than ideological whatever their own propaganda may claim. The Australian Liberal Party and the Conservative Party in Britain make much of the mystique of 'free enterprise' but obviously also serve certain 'interest' groups.

Regardless of the relative rank order in the middle of the range the important point is the totally different nature of the Country Party and the British Liberal Party in terms of pressure group/ideological party identity. This difference is explored in this chapter and an attempt made to discern a pattern, or lack of it, in the bases of support. Statistical data on both parties are relatively scarce compared to the major parties. In Britain this has been compounded by the smallness of the Liberal vote in the 1950's which, on any mass general sampling, hardly gave a large enough Liberal portion to have much statistical validity. In Australia the problem is compounded because so seldom is the Country Party base separated from the Liberal Party, they are usually lumped together as 'Non-Labor' or 'Anti-Labor'. However, it is felt that what data there are, presented in this chapter, certainly provides a clear outline of the essential differences between Australian Country Party and British Liberal Party support.

Rawson carried out an extensive study[1] on the results of the 1958 Australian Federal election for the House of Representatives and he observed that "most country people in Australia, including most of the farmers, vote for the parties other than the Country Party. It is a party held together by regional, industrial, and personal interests and loyalties, in all kinds of combinations, but with the regional factors usually predominating"[2]. Different country towns, apparently with very similar class distributions can be either strongly Liberal, give an A.L.P. majority, or be overwhelmingly Country Party[3]. What is true is that if the A.L.P. is to win a clear majority it has to do well in the country. 1958 was a bad year for the A.L.P. with the Country Party/Liberal government holding on to its large majority of around thirty seats. Even in this year the A.L.P. won fourteen seats outside the State capitals, compared to seventeen for the Liberal Party and twenty-one for the Country Party. Within the State capitals the Country Party won none, the A.L.P. won thirty-three and the Liberals thirty-nine.

The A.L.P. puts considerable effort in trying to win rural areas as do the Liberals to win the larger country towns. The most dependable support for the Country Party is among the wheat and dairy farmers, the smaller graziers, and those engaged in mixed farming. Geographically this sets close limits on Country Party strength which is pretty much restricted

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[1] D.W.R. Rawson. Australia Votes: The 1958 Federal Election (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1961).

[2] Ibid.,p.49.

[3] Ibid.,p.231.

to New England and the Riverina in N.S.W.; the Murray Valley and Gippsland in Victoria; parts of the Darling Downs and the south-eastern coastal zone in Queensland; and the coastal plains around Perth in Western Australia[1].

One very significant difference in looking at the rural vote in Australia is the very different relative position of agricultural earnings compared to wage rates in manufacturing. Compared to New Zealand, Norway, West Germany, Sweden and Britain, Australia was the only country where agricultural wage rates were higher than in manufacturing and the difference was increasing between 1950 and 1958[2]. Admittedly the sheep shearers are the financial aristocracy of agricultural workers, but the average gap between Australian agricultural rates and those of the other countries named above is too large to explain by this factor alone. However, it was traditionally true that the grazing country, with its high proportion of employees to landowners and with a powerful trade union organisation, had been favourable to Labor[3]. More intensive land use has reduced the number of electorates of this type and in 1958 this only provided three of the A.L.P.'s country seat wins.

As mentioned earlier the voting in country towns is extremely erratic[4]; in some of the larger country towns the A.L.P. vote ranges fr

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[1] Louise Overacker. Australian Parties in a Changing Society: 1945-67. (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1968), p.267.

[2] J.B. Condliffe. The Development of Australia (Galt: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), p.51.

[3] Rawson, p.231.

[4] Ibid.,p.232

one-third to two-thirds of the total whereas in some of the smaller towns it ranged from as little as fifteen percent to over fifty percent. There was no evidence[1] that the Country Party lacked appeal for townsmen in general. Where Country Party candidates were especially strong they were strong both in and out of towns, where it was weak in the towns the vote was weak in the surrounding rural areas. Exactly the same pattern was also shown for the Liberals. It does not seem, therefore, that the growth of the country towns in itself is going to benefit either the A.L.P. or the Liberals to any great extent. As Rawson observes "the ordinary country town as such, has no political colour of its own"[2].

As was noticed in the history of the development of the various state Country Parties they were the product of different factors and therefore it is not too surprising that there is no consistent pattern of support across Australia as a whole. The Country Party has tried to establish a claim to being a "non-class" party in a working/middle/upper classification but instead to be representative of the interests of all countryman[3], whether farmer, grazier, employee, country businessman and so on. If this is the case then it would be expected that the second preference votes of Country Party candidates would be relatively evenly divided between the A.L.P. and the Liberals where they were the remaining choice, and certainly more evenly

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[1] Rawson, p.233.

[2] Ibid.,p.234

[3] Ibid.,p.52

divided than the division between the A.L.P. and the Country Party where they were the remaining choice.

Gruen made a study[1] of N.S.W. elections from 1930 to 1941 and all State and Federal Elections from 1940 to 1962 in a variety of country electorates. He found that the average percentage of second preference Country Party votes going to Liberal (UAP/Nationalist) candidates was 85.37. In the minds of most Country Party voters, therefore, there is a very definite preference for the Liberals over the A.L.P. if their own man cannot win. Australian Public Opinion Polls show[2] not only farmers but farm workers to be more 'conservative' than all other classifications of 'worker'. One of the few clear facts seems to be that Liberal/Country Party voting strength rises with age[3]. If this trend continues then the declining birth rate spells long term problems for the A.L.P.

Overall there appears to be some justification to Jupp's opinion of the Australian parties as"machines for providing access to power, rather then movements striving after ideals"[4]. However, as was seen in the discussion

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[1]F.H. Gruen. "Rural Australia", in Australian Society: A Sociological Introduction, ed. by A.F. Davies and S. Encel (New York: Atherton Press, 1965), pp.257-259.

[2]Gruen, p.258

[3]A.F. Davies and S. Encel. "Politics" in Australian Society: A Sociological Introduction, ed. by A.F. Davies and S. Encel (New York: Atherton Press, 1965), p.113.

[4]James Jupp, Australian Party Politics. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1964), p.181.

at the beginning of this chapter the only party labelled as strongly 'ideological' in the sense of being 'non-pressure group' was the British Liberal Party and the 'striving after ideals' is not an altogether common trait of political parties.

In summary therefore, it can be said that the Country Party is primarily a small conservative party with historically defined and limited areas of support and satisfies certain specifically articulated economic needs of some country dwellers. It is perhaps only in its actual membership that it has a more clearly defined base with some three graziers, farmers or members of their family for every middle or lower middle class citizen of Country towns and villages.[1]

The situation of the British Liberal Party is very different. Alford considers that the Liberal Party in Britain functions as an 'ideological outlet' for the strains of a highly class-divided political system[2]. Certainly the results of the February 1974 general election would tend to bear out this view. Richard Rose, who has been responsible for many British political studies, feels that class is more important for British parties than it is in any other European party system[3]. In addition, there is a strong disposition in the minds of the public to associate the main

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[1] Crisp, p.218.

[2] Robert R. Alford, Party and Society. (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1963), p.158.

[3] Richard Rose. Class and Party Divisions: Britain as a Test Case (Glasgow: University of Strathclyde Survey Research Centre, Occasional Paper No. 1, n.d. (c.1968), p.31.

parties with the interests of classes[1]. Butler and Stokes published data[2] on party self image by occupational status in 1963, as shown below in table 5.

Table 5

Party Self-Image by Occupational Status, 1963 (U.K.)

Occupational Status Classification	Higher Managerial	Lower Managerial	Supervising Non-Manual	Lower Non-Manual	Skilled Manual	Unskilled Manual
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Party Self Image						
Conservative	86	81	77	61	29	25
Labour	14	19	23	39	71	75

They then extended this data to show the proportion who voted Conservative, Labour and Liberal. The tables for Labour and Liberal are repeated here as tables 6[3] and 7[4] respectively.

Table 6

Proportion (%) Labour Among Major Party Supporters by Occupational Level and Class Self Image, 1963 (U.K.)

Class Self Image	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Middle	10	11	9	17	46	55
Working	43	42	43	48	79	79

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[1] John Bonham. The Middle Class Vote. (London: Faber & Faber, 1954), p.179.

[2] David Butler and Donald Stokes, Political Change in Britain (London: Macmillan, 1969), p.77

[3] Ibid., p.78

[4] Ibid., p.79.

Table 7

Proportion (%) Liberal Among Major Party Supporters by Occupational Level and Class Self Image, 1963 (U.K.)

Class Self Image	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Middle	12	20	16	24	12	10
Working	22	14	13	14	10	5

The Conservative figures make up the balance in each case and show the reverse class self-image of Labour. The significant point is of course the much more even distribution among all occupational levels by class self-image for the Liberals. If the actual percentage vote by Party is considered, the same 'class' picture emerges, as shown in table 8.

Table 8

Parliamentary Voting by Social Class[1] (1959, 1964, 1966 U.K. General Elections)

Class	Conservative			Labour			Liberal		
	1959	1964	1966	1959	1964	1966	1959	1964	1966
Upper Middle	9	10	10	-	2	2	5	5	6
Middle	34	34	31	8	11	14	28	27	20
Working	52	50	52	76	75	70	56	61	65
Very Poor	5	6	7	16	12	14	11	7	9
Total Vote	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

[1] S.E. Finer, Comparative Government. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), p.145, based on British Institute of Public Opinion 'quota' samples.

In every class category from 'upper middle' to the 'very poor' the Liberal vote is between the Conservative and Labour and is striking evidence of the "non-class" basis of Liberal support. The table also brings out the interesting fact of how dependent the Conservatives are on the working class vote. With this dependence, Heath's industrial policies are difficult to rationalise from a purely political standpoint. The figures for the percentage of the total vote by class in the 1966 election are[1] - Upper Middle 6%; Middle 22%; Working 61%; Very Poor 11%. The maximum deviation of the actual Liberal vote was only 4%, in the case of working class. National Opinion Poll data, quoted by Pulzer[2] for the 1964 General Election, shows exactly the same picture with somewhat different figures because of a different class classification. Figures for the breakdown of the vote by class are even more conclusive, as is shown in table 9 from Gallup Poll data[3].

Table 9

Percentage Vote of Parties by Class (U.K. General Elections 1945-1964).

	1945			1950			1951			1955			1959			1964		
	C	Lab.	L	C	Lab.	L	C	Lab.	L	C	Lab.	L	C	Lab.	L	C	Lab.	L
Upper Middle	76	14	10	79	9	12	90	6	4	89	9	2	87	6	7	77	9	14
Middle	61	24	15	69	17	14	73	22	5	77	21	2	76	16	8	65	22	13
Working	32	57	11	36	53	11	44	52	4	41	57	11	40	54	6	33	53	14
Very Poor	32	57	11	24	64	12	31	67	2	44	54	2	25	68	7	32	59	9

[1] Ibid., p.143

[2] Peter G.J. Pulzer, Political Representation and Elections (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), p.105.

[3] Henry Durant. "Voting Behaviour in Britain, 1945-64; The Gallup Poll", in Studies in British Politics, ed. by Richard Rose (London: Macmillan, 1966), p.123 constructed from data shown in table 1.

The even nature of the distribution of the Liberal vote is remarkable compared with both Conservative and Labour. Considering the two class extremes of the 'upper middle' and 'very poor' the maximum variation for the Liberals was +5 percentage points (in 1964) compared to -62 (in 1959) for Labour and +62 (also in 1959) for the Conservatives. The minimum variation for the Liberals was zero (in 1950, 1955 and 1959) compared to -43 (in 1945) for Labour and +44 (also in 1945) for the Conservatives.

If occupation type is used as the criterion instead of class, the same picture emerges, as shown in table 10.[1]

Table 10

Liberal Party (U.K.) Preference by Occupation Type (1943-1959)

Date of Survey	% with Liberal Preference	
	Manual	Non-Manual
December, 1943	12 (1060)*	10 (378)
February, 1957	8 (743)	12 (558)
January, 1958	8 (415)	7 (344)
August, 1958	12 (874)	21 (692)
February, 1959	10 (397)	9 (309)
May/June, 1959	13 (871)	12 (606)

*Total Number of respondents in parentheses.

The average difference, over the six surveys, is less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ percent more for the non-manual over the manual. The difference is too small to be of any great significance but it certainly does not show a

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[1] Alford, p.153.

strong bias of support and is in line with Alford's own conclusion[1] that there is no striking evidence of differences between Liberals on any class basis.

The only indication of any class 'bias' is shown in the results[2] of a survey of supporters, members and officers, in the period 1951-54 of a single constituency, Glossop in Derbyshire. Compared with the class distribution of all the voters in the constituency Liberal support among business proprietors and workers was exactly the same and in both categories almost exactly half-way between Labour and Conservative. The Liberals had the highest support of all three parties among professional and managerial and the lowest among white collar workers. All the parties showed a decreasing involvment of those classified as workers among party members and even more so among party officers.

The largest single group among Liberal party officers in this same constituency was the white collar and more also, from this group, than for either Labour or Conservative. There may, therefore, be some truth in the idea, attractive to the Liberals, that they appeal to the better-educated.

In their study[3] of electoral behaviour in Greenwich in 1950, Benney, Gray and Pear found that the Liberal distribution of support, across

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[1] Alford, p.152

[2] Pulzer, p.74

[3] Mark Benney, A.P. Gray and R.H. Pear. How People Vote: A Study of Electoral Behaviour in Greenwich. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), p.103.

the full range of class, was more even than either Labour or Conservative. There was a marked difference in Liberal support from the manual class levels the higher the educational level (15 percent of those with secondary level education or higher compared with one percent from those with only primary education)[1] Rose also found some evidence of this and noted that workers with above-average education are less likely to vote Labour than workers with minimum education, especially if female[2]. He attributed this partly to aspiration and partly to frustration. It is in general true that, in Britain, women tend to vote Conservative more than men as is shown in table 11.[3]

Table 11

Sex Differences in Voting Behaviour (U.K.)
(Difference in % Vote Women Minus Men by Party, 1945-1964)

Party	1945	1950	1951	1955	1959	1964
Conservative	+ 8	+ 4	+ 8	+ 8	+ 6	+ 5
Labour	- 9	- 3	- 9	- 9	- 5	-10
Liberal	+ 1	- 1	+ 1	+ 1	- 1	+ 5

Apart from 1964, there is virtually no sex difference in the Liberal vote. Increasing age is also generally associated with more conservative voting and table 12[4] shows the effect of age difference in two voting groups, 'Young' (21-29 years old) and 'Middle Aged' (30-49 years old), on voting behaviour.

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[1]Mark Benney, A.P. Gray and R.H. Pear. How People Vote: A Study of Electoral Behaviour in Greenwich. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956),p.103.

[2]Rose, p.23

[3]Durant, p.125, derived from data shown in table 2 therein.

[4]Durant, p.126, derived from data shown in table 3 therein.

Table 12

Age Differences in Voting Behaviour (U.K.)
(Difference in % Vote Middle Aged minus Young Voters by Party, 1945-1964)

Party	1945	1950	1951	1955	1959	1964
Conservative	+ 7	+ 7	+ 4	+ 6	+ 2	+ 3
Labour	- 5	- 7	- 5	- 6	0	- 2
Liberal	- 2	0	+ 1	0	- 2	- 1

Again, age seems to have comparatively little influence on the Liberal vote. Of perhaps greater significance is that age seems to be declining as a differential factor between Labour and Conservative.

The effect of religion is debatable since the influence of the churches has declined considerably in Britain since the end of the nineteenth century. Alford considers that the only social bases for Liberal support which appear at all significant are "Nonconformity, Welsh and Greater London residence, and middle class self-identification"[1]. Rose, however, considered that the most significant spread in 'religious' voting by the working class was among Roman Catholics. In the 1964 general election only 17 percent of working class Catholics voted Conservative compared to 73 percent for Labour[2]. He relates this to Northern Ireland where the Catholics are anti-unionist, i.e. anti-conservative.

Geographically there are some differences in voting patterns in Britain though nowhere near to the extent of say the West and Quebec in Canada.

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[1] Alford, pp.152-153

[2] Rose, Appendix (table 6)

The rank order of class voting in the British regions, 1957-1962, is highest in Wales, followed by the North of England, Scotland, Midlands, London and the South[1]. This rank order is the same as for the unemployment rate and Alford suggests[2] that where unemployment is high class grievances are the most obvious and class cleavage the most pronounced. Class voting is also apparently higher in heavily Labour urban constituencies[3], again because class differences are more noticeable.

As far as Liberal strength is concerned, at any rate in the 1964 General Election, they are strongest in rural and seaside areas and weakest in industrial constituencies[4]. This also is very similar to the areas of Conservative strength. Liberal strength was relatively greatest in Scotland, Wales, Yorkshire, Northwest and Southwest England, which includes the so-called 'Celtic fringe' and poorest in East Anglia, the Midlands and inner London[5].

Although the background of supporters is important so also is the background of parliamentary candidates and members of parliament since this reflects, in many ways, the leaders view of the party base. The Labour Party has its share of old Etonians and ex-public schoolboys at the M.P. level, in

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[1] Alford, p.148.

[2] Ibid., p.149.

[3] Ibid., p.133.

[4] H.B. Berrington. "The General Election of 1964". Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, (Series A), 128(1965), p.35

[5] Ibid., p.34.

the region of 15 to 20 percent of their total[1]. The Liberal Party lies between Labour and Conservatives in the number of its candidates with public school backgrounds, with something like half of its candidates with grammar school backgrounds.

As far as the class background of the candidates is concerned the Liberal party is still faced with its traditional dilemma of aiming to be a 'non-class conscious' party coupled with a 'class' bias in its leadership. Keir Hardie, Ramsay Macdonald and Arthur Henderson were all rejected as Liberal candidates[2] nearly a century ago with incalculable consequences for the image and future of both the Liberal Party and the Labour Party. The different 'class' backgrounds of Asquith and Lloyd George was an underlying factor in their feud. The proportions of working class candidates, for each of the major parties, is shown in table 13[3].

Table 13

Percentage of Working Class Candidates in Recent U.K. General Elections

	Conservative	Labour	Liberal
1950	1.1	14.9	2.7
1951	2.4	26.9	0.9
1955	3.0	28.2	3.6
1959	2.2	27.6	2.3
1964	1.8	23.8	3.0
1966	1.3	21.4	1.6
1970	1.3	16.2	0.3

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[1] Blondel, p.137

[2] Leon D. Epstein. Political Parties in Western Democracies, (New York: Praeger, 1967), p.174

[3] Cyr, derived from data on p.76.

The chances of a Liberal candidate being elected are low and a politically active working class person is more likely to achieve political influence in the Labour Party. However, even in the Labour Party the percentage of Labour M.P.'s with working class backgrounds has been steadily falling from 86 percent in 1906 to 71 percent in 1923, 38 percent in 1945 and 30 percent in 1966[1]. Many of the remaining working class Labour M.P.'s are from the trade-union sponsored group in safe Labour mining and steel industry seats. The background of the Labour Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet has became even less working class as shown in table 14[2].

Table 14

Percentage of U.K. Labour Cabinet with Working Class Background

Date		Percentage Working Class Background
1924	Cabinet	55
1929	Cabinet	42
1935	Shadow Cabinet	50
1945	Cabinet	50
1950	Cabinet	50
1951	Shadow Cabinet	21
1955	Shadow Cabinet	28
1959	Shadow Cabinet	28
1964	Cabinet	22
1966	Cabinet	17
1967	Cabinet	9

Note: Working Class Background defined as working-class father with career begun as a worker with no secondary education.
Shadow Cabinet limited to elected Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

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[1] Rose, p.3.

[2] Epstein, p.177 and Rose, Appendix (table 2)

This trend is partly a reflection of the increased availability of secondary education but also because many of the politically active middle class, who might otherwise have entered the Liberal Party, have entered the Labour Party as a more probable route to political power. A review of the background of sixty-three Liberal candidates, interviewed in 1960-61, showed overwhelming middle-class background and particularly the newer middle class - the clerical, communications, professional middle class - rather than of the traditional middle class of small commercial interests[1].

One factor that makes it very difficult to pinpoint the sources comes from a constantly changing group[2]. In Alford's studies each of the four surveys available showed that less than one-third of the Liberal vote was constant[3]. With the low level of Liberal support in the 1950's "even modest changes in the rates at which the Liberals attracted and lost supporters could yield net changes of support that must be regarded, proportionately, as very large indeed"[4]. The 1974 election results certainly bears this out.

A major factor in Liberal election fortunes is related to canvassing. Canvassing in Britain is important because of the strict limits on campaign spending at the constituency level[5]. Butler and Stokes reported[6] the effect on Liberal support, in seats the Liberals fought in 1964, by 1963

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[1]Jorgen Scott Rasmussen, Retrenchment and Revival. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1964), pp.216-217.

[2]Butler and Stokes, p.315.

[3]Alford, p.158

[4]Butler and Stokes, p.317

[5]Epstein, p.114

[6]Butler and Stokes, p.

preference and Liberal canvassing in 1964, as shown in table 15.

Table 15

Effect of Canvassing on Liberal Support (U.K.)

	1963 Preference			
	For Liberals		For Other than Liberals	
	Canvassed by Liberals	Not Canvassed by Liberals	Canvassed by Liberals	Not Canvassed by Liberals
Voted Liberals, 1964	72%	45%	12%	9%
Voted other than Liberal, 1964	28	55	88	91
(N) =	32	99	85	488

Canvassing is thus especially needed in order to hold on to those leaning towards the Liberals and the Liberal Party success, or otherwise, in holding onto or improving its February 1974 vote will largely depend on grassroots work at the constituency level.

One final aspect in considering Liberal support lies in the Liberal Party attitude towards the trade unions, which are so powerful politically and economically in Britain. The Labour Party is basically 'pro' union and, in recent years, the Conservative Party has appeared as strongly 'anti' union. The Liberals are somewhat more likely than the Conservatives to consider the trade unions to be a 'good thing'[1]. The Liberals are much more likely to answer 'don't know' to that type of question, which

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[1] Alford, p.156.

may be an even better indication that they are torn between wanting to recognise the legitimacy of trade unions and wanting to preserve the freedom of the individual worker[1].

The picture that emerges of the bases of support for the British Liberal Party is mainly an attractive one. Support is not based on class, as with the two major parties, or on appeals to envy or specific economic interests. It is essentially an appeal to moderates which becomes attractive to greater numbers of people the more extreme the two major parties become or appear to become. In this respect it is, therefore, very different from the Australian Country Party which has a narrow base and primarily seeks to hang on to this base at all costs and is not concerned with any general appeal throughout all segments of Australian society.

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[1]Alford, p.156.

CHAPTER 6

PARTY LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATION

In the early chapters the constitutional background and the historical development of the Australian Country Party and the British Liberal Party were examined. Crucial to the development and success of any political party is the calibre of its leadership and the way in which its organisation assists in developing and promoting the party's aims. As will be discussed in chapter 8 electoral success, in terms of seats won, is much more related to the electoral system than to the excellence or otherwise of the party's leaders and organisation.

Both the Country Party and the Liberal Party have had fewer leaders, since 1918, than either of their two major party opponents. In its fifty-three years of existence to-date the Country Party has had three leaders - Earle Page, Arthur Fadden and John McEwen - for 49 of these years. Douglas Anthony has been leader since 1971 and the only other leader, A.G. Cameron, served for only two years in 1939 to 1941 between the long leadership periods of Earle Page and Arthur Fadden. Cameron later served as Speaker of the House of Representatives, having had the dubious distinction in his earlier career of once being named by the Speaker of the day and suspended from the service of the House[1].

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[1] L.F. Crisp, Australian National Government. (Croydon: Longmans, 1965), p.245.

Page, Fadden and McEwen were all strong, aggressive personalities, the only comparable British Liberal Party leader in this period being David Lloyd George. The Country Party leadership at the Federal level has certainly been an important factor in their political success.

As Ellis described him "Page had a genius for constructive ideas. The path from the problem was rarely a procession of well-ordered steps. He applied to political problems his surgeon's facility for quick diagnosis and was apt to bridge the gap in one inspired leap, arguing backwards from the solution to the problem to justify his conclusion"[1]. Whether Doug Anthony can cope with the A.L.P.'s attempts, now that they have a majority, to emasculate the Country Party electorally, remains to be seen.

As might be expected from the different backgrounds of the two parties the backgrounds of their leaders are very different. Most of the Liberal leaders have been lawyers and even in recent years, Grimond and Thorpe are both products of Eton and Oxford. The Country Party leaders are much closer in background to their followers. Both McEwen and Anthony are farmers, Page was a country doctor and Fadden started his working life as a clerk in the local mill, became Assistant Town Clerk in the small country town in which he was born and then Town Clerk. McEwen and Fadden both came from Queensland, Page and Anthony from New South Wales and Cameron from South Australia. Liberal Party leaders have also come from a relatively narrow geographic base - Sinclair and Grimond from Scotland, Lloyd

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[1] Ulrich Ellis. A History of the Australian Country Party. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1963), p.100.

George and Davies from Wales, Asquith and Samuel from northern England. Thorpe was born in London but represents a Devonshire constituency.

The educational background of the Country Party leaders is much closer to that of their supporters. Apart from Page, the only leader with any post-secondary education is Anthony who went to an Agricultural College after attending the local primary and secondary schools. McEwen was a soldier settler after the First World War as were many of the original Country Party members. Of the seven British Liberal Party leaders since the First World War only one, Lloyd George, did not go to Oxbridge - Asquith, Samuel and Grimond all went to Balliol College, Oxford. Even the Liberal Party suffers from the class aspects of the educational system in England and underlines the difficulty of any non-socialist party there achieving any radical break from the traditional past. The Liberal Party is certainly better equipped to do this than the Conservative Party but will not find it easy.

Party organisation is very different. The Country Party has a simple structure (figure 2) compared with the Liberal Party. However, the Liberal Party is attempting to practise as well as preach participatory democracy and has made commendable efforts to ensure policy input from all areas of the party and has a cumbersome structure. As a Federal organisation the Country Party has a loose, even rather informal organisation, almost all the organisational strength is at the State level[1].

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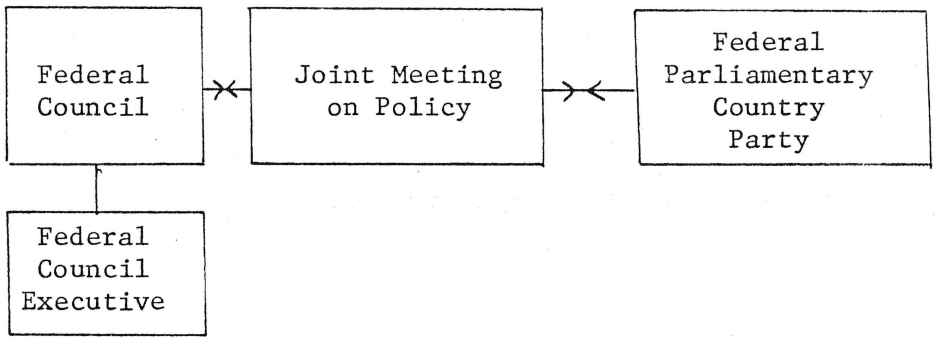
[1]Crisp, p.224.

Figure 2

Organisation of the Australian Federal Country Party



The Federal Parliamentary Country Party, as its name implies, consists of the Federal Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Federal Council is the main link with the Country Party State Organisations. It was established[1] in March 1926 and consists of the Federal Leader and Deputy Leader, the State Leaders, the immediate past President, one Federal parliamentarian from each State and four non-parliamentary representatives (one of whom must be a woman) from each State. The maximum possible size of the Council is therefore only thirty-nine compared to a maximum membership for the Liberal Party Council approaching three hundred.

The Federal Council Executive, composed of the Federal Officers and State leaders, meets relatively infrequently. The Federal policy of the party is determined at a joint meeting of the Federal Parliamentary Party and the Federal Council. Such meetings must be held at least triennially and in voting on policy resolutions only the Federal Councillors present may vote[2].

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[1]Crips, p.224.

[2]Crisp, p.224.

The costs of the Federal Council and its activities are largely met from affiliation fees paid by the State Branches[1]. In relation to its total vote at General Elections the Country Party has a large membership. In the late 1960's Albinski[2] put A.L.P. individual membership at just over 40,000, Country Party membership at over 80,000 and the Liberal Party at around 120,000. (Jupp[3] gives a somewhat higher figure for the A.L.P. of 55,000 in the early sixties). The Country Party often succeeds in recruiting a quarter or more of its vote into Party branch membership. There are apocryphal stories that in parts of the Victoria Mallee wheat-belt there are small townships where the paid-up party membership even exceeds the vote[4]. Although much of its revenue is based on individual dues and donations, McEwen House, the Country Party's Headquarters in Canberra, was largely financed through contributions from industrialists.[5]

At the Federal level the parliamentary party has considerable freedom of manoeuvre, particularly compared to the A.L.P. This is virtually essential for a minority party which needs flexibility in order to give it greater bargaining power. Given the strong leadership mentioned earlier

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[1] Crisp, p.224.

[2] Henry S. Albinski. Canadian and Australian Politics in Comparative Perspective. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p.185.

[3] James Jupp. Australian Party Politics. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1964), p.197.

[4] Ibid., p.198.

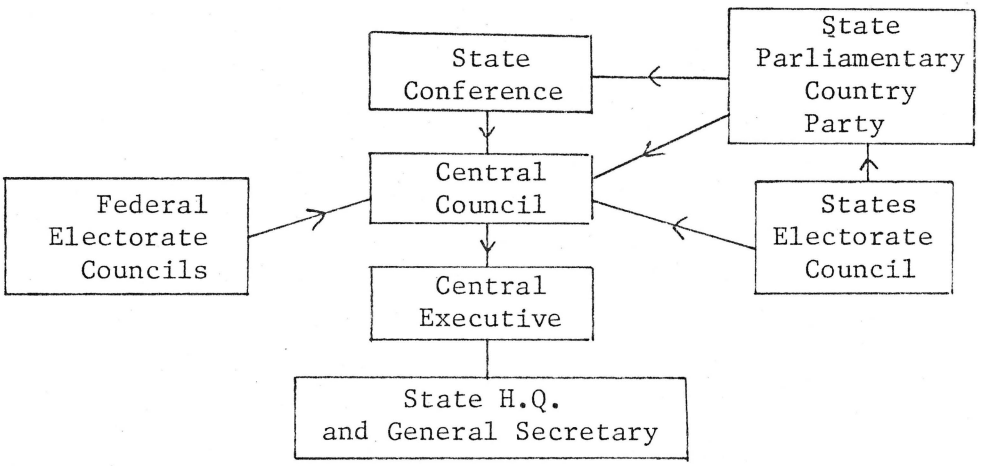
[5] Albinski, p.164.

this has given the Country Party influence out of proportion to its numbers. On the reverse side, apart from its leaders, the Federal Country Party has produced anything but striking or conspicuously able men[1].

At the State level the New South Wales organisation[2] is typical and is shown in figure 3.

Figure 3

Organisation of the N.S.W. Country Party



The State Conference meets annually and its members consist of all members of the various Electorate (constituency) Councils, both Federal and State, the Central Council, Central Executive and delegates from all branches. The Central Council consists of the Chairmen of the Federal and State Electorate Councils, Federal and State Leaders, two Federal and two State Parliamentarians plus certain ex-officio and co-opted members.

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[1] Crisp, p.223.

[2] Ibid., p.222.

The Central Executive is made up of some sixteen members elected by the Central Council plus Federal and State Leaders.

The principal restriction in the Federal Country Party Constitution on the potential actions of its Leader is a prohibition of any form of alliance with another political party that would threaten the separate entity of the Country Party. Although the Federal Council is given a veto on the acceptance of portfolios in a composite government this is not a serious restraint since the parliamentarians ordinarily dominate the Council[1].

The British Liberal Party has been out of power, in any real sense, for over half-a-century. The Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons could, in recent years, have been transported in a minibus. The Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party has therefore neither had, nor potentially had, the powers of a Prime Minister. His main function has been to project a good 'image' of the Liberal Party and in this respect the Liberal Party has been well served by Grimond and Thorpe. Since it is far from the levers of power and places great store on individual freedom it has developed a party structure that gives far greater opportunity to the ordinary members than do either the Labour or Conservative Parties.

The Labour Party Annual Conference is dominated by the block votes of the large unions and the Conservative Party Annual Conference often appears to serve only as a rubber stamp for pious platitudes. The main interest, for the outside observer, of either conference is to see what support the extremists of the Left or Right are able to muster for such items as

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[1] Crisp, p.223.

"total nationalisation" or a "restoration of flogging and capital punishment".

The Liberal Party of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland is a federated party with independent constituent parties in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The climate for any true form of liberalism is none too kindly in Northern Ireland at present and, at the 1974 General Elections, the Liberals contested none of the Ulster seats in the House of Commons. Within England the various Constituency Associations are organised into Regional Federations and party membership is through either the local constituency association, or in the absence of one, through direct membership of a Regional Party. The Constituency Association is the financial base of the party and the National Executive Committee, subject to Assembly approval, determines the Affiliation Fees for Constituency Associations. As of 1st January 1973 the Affiliation Fee was thirty pounds (approximately seventy dollars)[1]. Liberal Party membership tends to fluctuate considerably but in 1964 stood at around 300,000[2] compared to 2,150,000 for the Conservative Party[3] and 830,000 in individual membership of the Labour Party[4]. What the Liberals lack in numbers they tend to make up in enthusiasm, even though the disproportionate reward for the number of votes their candidates receive may then dampen their enthusiasm.

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[1]Resolution 15, Liberal Assembly, Margate, September 1972.

[2]Richard Rose. Influencing Voters (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), p.269

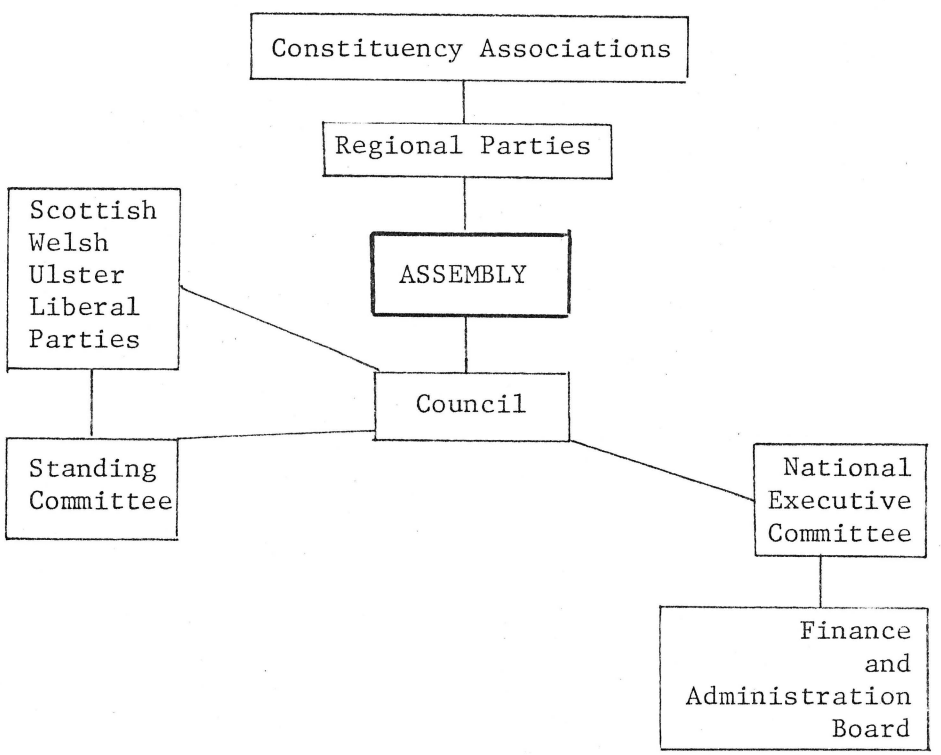
[3]Ibid., p.261

[4]Ibid., p.251

The Liberal Party organisation has changed very little over the years as a comparison of the 1948 structure[1] and the 1969 structure[2] indicates. The organization shown in figure 4 is based on Cruikshank and purposely shows the greater importance given to the Constituency Associations, Regional Parties, the Assembly and the Council.

Figure 4

Organisation of the Liberal Party of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland



[1] R.J. Cruikshank. The Liberal Party. (London: Collins, 1948), p.47.

[2] John D. Lees and Richard Kimber, eds. Political Parties in Modern Britain (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p.25.

The most significant thing about this structure is the absence of any over-riding authority by either the Party Leader or the Parliamentary Party. It can obviously be suggested that this is because of the absence of power in either of these because of their own distance from governmental power. Although there is no doubt some truth in this, it is unlikely that a Liberal party leader would ever achieve, or even aspire to, the personal power of a Conservative or Labour Party leader. If there is one thing the Liberal Party in Britain should have learned it is the penalties of personal power and personal power conflicts between strong personalities.

The Leader of the Liberal Party is elected by the Liberal members in the House of Commons. The President of the Liberal Party is elected by the Assembly and is "the guardian of the Party's Constitution". Up to fifteen Vice-Presidents can be elected, for life, by a two-thirds majority of the National Executive Committee, they can be removed by the President subject to ratification by the National Executive.

Policy making is basically the rôle of the Council and the Standing Committee. The Council is a very large body and consists of:

All members of the National Executive Committee

Vice-Presidents of the Liberal Party

Six members of the House of Lords chosen annually by the Liberal members of the House of Lords

Six members of the House of Commons - Chief Whip plus five chosen annually by the Liberal members (one must be from a Scottish

constituency, as must one of the elected peers be Scottish). There is no similar requirement for Welsh representation.

All members of the Standing Committee

Two representatives from each Regional Party plus one additional representative for every ten or part of ten affiliated Constituency Associations.

Representatives of Scottish, Ulster and Welsh Liberal Parties as for the Regional Parties

Thirty representatives of the party as a whole, elected by ballot at the Assembly.

Not more than fifteen members each appointed by the Women's Liberal Federation, Liberal Candidates Association, National League of Young Liberals, Union of Liberal Students, Association of Liberal Councillors.

Two representatives appointed annually by each of the Liberal Agents Association, National Union of Liberal Clubs Limited and the Association of Liberal Trades Unionists.

The Council has the power to appoint not more than fifteen members in recognition of distinguished service to the Party.

The Council has the responsibility of stimulating militant Liberalism and expressing the views of Liberals on current political questions. Under the Liberal Party Constitution the Council is required to meet at least four times per year.

The Standing Committee is responsible to Council for planning the long-term evolution of Liberal Policy; for expressing, between meetings of the Council, the views of the Liberal Party on urgent political issues, and presents policy motions to Council. This Committee is of more manageable size with a maximum membership of twenty-four, made up as follows:

Leader of Party

Chief Whip in House of Commons

Leader of Liberal Peers

Chairman of National Executive Committee

Chairman of Finance and Administration Board

Standing Committee Chairman appointed annually by the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons

Twelve members elected annually by an electorate consisting of all members of Council together with all M.P.'s and candidates who are not members of Council.

One representative from each of the Scottish, Ulster and Welsh Liberal Parties.

Up to three co-opted members.

The Standing Committee membership is much more under the control of the Parliamentary Party and the Liberal candidates and as the party representation in Parliament grows so would the influence of the Standing Committee.

The Leader of the Party is responsible for the compilation of the party's General Election Manifesto in consultation with the Standing Committee and the Liberal Candidates Association.

The Assembly is a very large body with a potential delegate strength of several thousand. It is composed of:

All members of either House of Parliament

All Parliamentary Candidates

All Councillors and Aldermen who are members of the Association of Liberal Councillors

Honorary Officers of the Party

All members of Council

All members of Regional Federation Councils

All persons entitled to vote at Annual Conferences of Scottish, Ulster and Welsh Liberal Parties.

Representatives of Constituency Associations at the rate of one per fifty members up to a maximum of twenty per association.

Representatives of each of the following bodies in proportion of one for every twenty-five members up to a maximum of 200 representatives per body:

- Association of Liberal Trade Unionists
- National League of Young Liberals
- National Union of Liberal Clubs
- Union of Liberal Students
- Women's Liberal Federation

Agents and Organisers of Constituency Associations who are members of the Liberal Agents Association.

The functions of the Assembly are to:

(1) Elect Party Officers and those members of Council chosen by the Assembly

(2) Receive from Council and consider reviews of progress and work of the Party, financial statements, etc,

(3) Consider resolutions on public policy.

As will be noted there is provision at the Assembly for the attendance of large numbers of Young Liberals, some of whose loudly expressed views are little different from Maoist, Marxist, Trotskyist and all the other variants of the extreme political Left. Although this has given the Liberals a bad 'press' it can definitely be argued that the Liberals are in fact practising what they preach, namely freedom of speech, and that surely it is better to have these young activists exposed to more moderate opinions than operating in the streets with only their own rhetoric for intellectual nourishment.

Finally, there is the National Executive Committee, which is roughly double numerically than the Standing Committee and which directs the day-to-day work of the Party and, through the Finance and Administration Board, oversees the employment of staff and the running of headquarters. The National Executive consists of the:

President

President Elect

Immediate Past President

Leader of Party in Commons

Leader of the Liberal Peers

Chief Whips in both Houses

Treasurer

Representatives from Regional Parties, Scottish, Ulster and Welsh Parties and the other affiliated Liberal organisations.

Eight members elected by ballot of Council.

The National Executive Committee may co-opt up to five additional members.

Provision is made for the amendment of the Liberal Party Constitution. Amendments require a two-thirds majority of delegates voting at an Assembly and they can be proposed by any five Constituency Associations. The Constituency Associations have complete control over the selection of parliamentary candidates which, under the Party Constitution, is by secret ballot with the alternative vote.

Most of the Australian State Country Parties require central headquarters endorsement of candidates. The British Conservative and Labour Party headquarters use various tactics, subtle and not so subtle, to impose candidates on local associations and various 'rebels' periodically surface, usually to be defeated - a notable recent exception being Mr. Dick Taverne

who not only retained his seat at a by-election but also at the February 1974 General Election, (but lost it in the October General Election) in addition his supporters won numerous seats at both the city and regional level.

Labour and Conservative members of parliament can be subject to unpleasant pressures from their constituency parties. A recent case[1] involved Mr. E. Griffiths, Labour M.P. for Brightside, Sheffield. He jointly runs the Commons All-party Committee on Association Football with Mr. E. Money, Conservative M.P. for Ipswich. He recently visited Mr. Money and they were photographed together at a local football game. The Ipswich Labour Party sent a letter of protest to the Brightside Party, which was expected to move a vote of no confidence in Mr. Griffiths. It is perhaps difficult to grasp, in Canada, that party politics can be quite so personally petty. It is incidents such as these that illustrate not only the class divisiveness in British society but also the unhealthy autocratic ways of the two major parties who between them have set up an "Establishment" that is almost all-stifling. Mr. Griffiths was asked to resign by the constituency party management committee and was denied re-adoption for the October 1974 election[2]. His appeal against these actions, to the Labour Party National Executive, was unsuccessful - possibly because the Executive has, in recent years, itself become dominated by extremists.

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[1] "Left Threat to Sack Labour M.P." Sunday Telegraph, June 30,1974,p.4

[2] Malcolm Pithers. "M.P. Appeals Over Call to Resign". The Guardian September 7, 1974, p.1, c.5,6.

CHAPTER 7

"NEW STATES" AND "REGIONALISM"

It is important to draw the distinctions between the New States movements and Secessionism in Australia and between Home Rule and Independence or Self Government, in Great Britain.

There is no provision in the Australian Constitution for secession. However, this did not deter a majority of voters in Western Australia from approving a referendum to secede in 1933. The Government of Western Australia presented a petition to the "United Kingdom Parliament praying for amendment of the Constitution Act by detaching State from the Commonwealth"[1]. At that time the 1931 Statute of Westminster had not been adopted by the Federal Parliament in Canberra. A joint committee of the House of Lords and the House of Commons was appointed to consider whether the Western Australia petition should be received. There was considerable concern in Britain that this would be regarded as a serious interference in the internal affairs of a self-governing Dominion and that even its discussion by Parliament could have had grave repercussions both in Australia and in other parts of the British Commonwealth of Nations. The joint committee ruled that the petition should not be received and the matter died down.

Although the question of secession is probably fairly academic

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[1] H.R. Anderson. "The Constitutional Framework", in The Government of the Australian States, ed. by S.R. Davis (London: Longmans, 1960), p.52.

it theoretically could be effected through the normal constitutional amending procedure. However, to secure approval would require the consent of the electors in at least four out of the six states. To achieve this would imply that the problem causing the demand for secession was readily recognised. If it was that widely accepted then either other solutions would be found or else there would be a real danger of the entire federation breaking up.

The Scottish National Party, in its statement of Aim and Policy adopted 7-8 December 1946, clearly spells out its goal of and route to self-government. It is predicated "on the election to the British Parliament of a majority of Scottish National members from Scotland, a Scottish Constituent Assembly shall be summoned"[1]. Britain has experienced unilateral declarations of independence before, in the case of Rhodesia. However, since there is no written constitution the recognition of self-government for Scotland, or Wales, or some form of federation, would require only the passing of an appropriate Act through the British Parliament.

In the same way as the Country Party does not support Secessionism neither does the Liberal Party support break-away self-government movements in Britain. In both countries the pressures towards greater regional recognition are localised. In Britain it is confined to Scotland, Wales and the perennial problem of Northern Ireland. In Australia it is mainly confined to New South Wales and Queensland, though there has been some minor

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[1]H.J. Hanham. Scottish Nationalism. (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 213.

activity in the western part of Victoria and the south-east corner of South Australia. The possible entry of New Zealand was certainly very much in mind at the time of the original constitutional convention though it is unlikely at present. Theoretically, areas such as Fiji, Papua and New Guinea could apply for "admission" and, at some future date, the Northern Territories could become a new state or states. However, we are concerned here only with the major New State movements and their relationship to the Country Party.

If the area is defined closely enough there is strong support for the New State concept and for the Nationalists in Scotland and Wales. In Scotland it is estimated that rather more than sixty percent of the population favour some form of Home Rule[1], not necessarily all going as far as self-government. In the 1967 referendum held in the northern part of New South Wales (including the Newcastle District) although the New State supporters lost there was a 67 percent vote in favour of a new state in the rural area outside Newcastle, the coalfields and the Hunter Valley areas and a 75 percent vote against in those same areas[2].

The reasons why the British Liberals and the Country Party support regional concepts are very different. "Believing in government of, by, and for the primary producer and realising that in the Commonwealth he is

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[1] Hanham, p.12.

[2] Don Aitkin, "Political Review" The Australian Quarterly, 40(1) (March 1968), p.98

hopelessly outnumbered by the urban voter, the (Country) party leaders advocate 'new states' in the hope that the new states will be controlled by the country minded voter"[1]. The attraction to the Country Party leadership lies mainly in the additional Senate seats, since each new state would be entitled to the same number of seats as the present states. With the usual close balance in the Senate between the Liberals and the Australian Labor Party a solid block of Country Party Senators, who could be re-elected even on a double dissolution, would give the Country Party almost a permanent veto.

The British Liberal Party support for devolution is fundamental to their basic philosophy of individual freedom. Even though it has cost them sorely the Liberals have been firm supporters of this concept ever since they first espoused Home Rule for Ireland in 1886. That policy cost them the support of the Liberal Unionists under Joseph Chamberlain and was a major cause of enmity between the Liberals and Conservatives. Although this policy benefitted the Liberal Party electorally in the non-English parts of the United Kingdom, it cost them support in the more numerous seats in England. Since the Country Party is an openly sectional party that does not expect ever to get support in urban areas they lose nothing by their espousal of New States since these areas are basically antagonistic to the metropolitan areas anyway. In the concept of ideological pressure groups within political parties it can be argued that in the case of the Country

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[1] Louise Overacker. The Australian Party System (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p.226

Party it is so little concerned with general ideas that it is only the New States movements that can be described as exercising any pressure within the Party[1].

Inevitably, the espousal of regional movements invokes some response from the other parties. In Britain, the Conservatives with their historic Unionist associations make no effort to cater to these views. The Labour Party in the past paid lip service to the concept of devolution. Recent nationalist electoral successes have spurred the Labour party to promise the introduction of regional Assemblies for Scotland and Wales. In Australia it has been part of the Liberal Party platform to create New States, since the late 1950's[2], but this again seems to be mainly window-dressing. The Australian Labor Party approach to the question is somewhat Machiavellian. The A.L.P. is strongly unitarian and considers that additional new states would fragment and weaken the power of the State Governments in general, resulting in a corresponding increase in the power of the central government.

Leach[3] summarised eight reasons for the concept of New States. These are given below with observations on their validity.

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[1]James Jupp. Australian Party Politics (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1964), p.197.

[2]Ibid., p.166

[3]Richard M. Leach. "The New State Movement in Australia", Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies, III (1965), pp.20-31.

(1) Comparison with the creation of new states in the United States and of new provinces in Canada. By comparison Australia was already divided up into separate colonies on its formation. This, however, is more an accident or fact of geography and history and not a rationale for the creation of New States.

(2) The United States achieved its position of wealth and power by creating new states, therefore to achieve same ends Australia must do the same. The creation of new states in the U.S. is a very minor factor in its growth of wealth - massive immigration and enormous natural resources were of far greater significance. The economy of the Dakotas or of Saskatchewan indicate that the creation of new states or provinces in a federal system does not automatically create growth.

(3) The formation of a large number of new states would cause such immense problems in regulating interstate trade (section 92 of the Constitution makes extremely difficult for the Commonwealth Government to regulate interstate trade) and particularly in the orderly marketing of agricultural products that basic amendments to the Constitution would soon follow. This presupposes a need for major amendments to the Constitution which, if the demand really existed, could be done without creating a large number of new states.

although this argument might appeal to the Australian Labor Party it appears to be an odd way to effect constitutional reform.

(4) It would permit country dwellers to govern themselves instead of being dominated by urban residents. The argument is basically one of fairness but may be secondary to considerations of economic viability. Ellis[1] pointed out that the proposed State of New England (in northern part of N.S.W.) would have an area of 64,000 square miles and a population, in 1956, of 700,000 people, which would make it fifth out of seven in terms of population. In terms of the value of production (in 1952/3) it would have exceeded Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia. The proposed State of Northern Queensland would have an area of 272,000 square miles and a population, in 1956, of 235,000 (about two-thirds that of Tasmania) with an annual production close to that of Tasmania.

(5) New States are essential for Australia's security in order to promote the growth of population and development. This again is not necessarily true, reference the example of Prince Edward Island with a basically static population and economy. In Britain there have been strong moves in recent years to larger local government units involving, for instance, the disappearance of Rutland and the incorporation of parts of Yorkshire into Lancashire.

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[1] Ulrich Ellis "New States" The Australian Encyclopaedia, 1963, 6, pp.295-300.

(6) New States would develop the interior. This presupposes that they would have both the will and the resources to do so. Granted, the growth and magnitude of the state capital cities is a cause for concern but if there was any real intent to remedy that situation it could be done, and probably more effectively, in ways other than the creation of new states.

(7) The creation of new states would create a better balance in the physical size of the Australian States. Tasmania has an area of 26,200 square miles and Western Australia of 975,900 square miles. However, creating new states all of Tasmania size would result in something like one hundred states which, apart from questions of economic viability, would imply some very artificial boundaries and even more enormous differences in population since presumably each of the present State capitals would still all be in one state.

(8) The final argument advanced by Leach is that if large groups of people want a new State they should be allowed to have it. Although in theory most democratic it is politically unreal. Some might argue that if Quebec were ever to secede from Canada then the western part of the island of Montreal might wish to secede from Quebec or be recognised as a separate State within a federal Quebec, a solution which however much it might be desired by the local population is unlikely to be recognised.

The British Liberal Party policy is clearly stated in its 1974 General Election Manifesto, published on 13 February 1974. "In the long term we would establish a federal system of government for the United Kingdom with powers in domestic matters transferred to Parliaments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and provincial assemblies in England. The Westminster Parliament would then become a Federal Parliament with a reformed Second Chamber in which the majority of members would be elected on a regional basis..."[1]. To Canadians and Australians this would seem a straightforward proposal, in fact their own national structure of parliament - apart from the appointed Canadian Senate. It is certainly not so regarded in England where the idea of the English being the 'senior partner' in the United Kingdom, with a far flung Empire, is still good for an emotional response in the Conservative Party. In General Elections since 1935 the Conservative Party have never held a majority of Welsh Seats and have only had a majority of Scottish seats in 1935 and 1955. Labour has continuously held a majority of Welsh seats since 1935, also in Scotland with the exceptions noted and have only held a majority of English seats in 1945 and 1966. The one Liberal seat would have represented the balance of power in Scotland in 1951. If one crudely regards the present British electoral system as a gamble for power with high stakes 'winner-take-all' approach then obviously neither the Conservative nor the Labour Party is likely to be attracted to federalism. This question is discussed in more detail in the concluding chapter.

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[1] Keesings Contemporary Archives, 1974, pp.26376/7.

Constitutionally the creation of New States is covered in chapter VI, articles 121-124, of the Australian Constitution. Article 123 deals with altering the boundaries of a State and gives this power to the Federal Parliament subject to the consent of both houses of the Parliament of the State concerned and to the approval of a majority of electors of the State voting upon the question. Article 124 states that "A new State may be formed by separation of territory from a State, but only with the consent of the Parliament thereof..." Anderson[1] states that "the better opinion seems to be that article 123 has nothing to do with the creation of new States at all and is limited to other adjustments of boundaries". As will be seen in the outline of the new States movements that follows this has not been the interpretation in New South Wales where a referendum was held in 1967. If the opinion quoted by Anderson is correct a referendum is unnecessary if the new State is formed out of an area totally within the boundaries of an existing state.

The history of the New States Movements is older than the history of Australia as a federation. At the time of the Constitutional Convention in 1897-98, there was considerable agitation in Queensland to organise self-government for Central and Northern Queensland and thus to have Queensland admitted as three separate Colonies. It is for this reason that Queensland had the right to elect Senators on the basis of electoral districts rather than on a single state-wide electorate as in the other states.

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[1] Anderson, p.53.

On three occasions since Federation, State legislatures have carried resolutions affirming the desirability of New States in Queensland and New South Wales. Secessionist tendencies in northern (New England) and southern (Riverina) N.S.W. were greatly strengthened during the tenure in 1925-27 and 1930-32 of J.T. Lang as Premier of N.S.W. In February 1931 Earle Page called openly for the secession of the north if Lang persisted with his "repudiationist" policies. It was a strangely radical step for a constitutional and conservative party (the Country Party) to approve[1].

The New England New State Movement has had diverse support. After the First World War it attracted many returning soldiers. In the early 1950's some members of the New England New State Movement were also active in the National Catholic Rural Movement, which in turn included active Country Party members[2]. The N.C.R.M. was founded in 1940 with B.A. Santamaria as its first secretary and took a decidedly spiritual approach to the benefits of small farming. Its aims were somewhat idealistic and impractical which may be why it had bedfellows in the New State Movement. The Scottish National Party, in its earlier years, flirted with the Social Credit theories of Major Douglas[3].

Over the years a number of Royal Commissions have been appointed

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[1]Jupp, p.151.

[2]Robert Murray, The Split: Australian Labor in the Fifties 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Cheshire Publishing, 1972), p.109.

[3]Hanham, pp.145 and 174.

to report on various aspects of New Statism. The 1923 commission in N.S.W. reported (in 1925) that New States in N.S.W. were neither viable nor desirable. A Federal Royal Commission, that had been appointed in 1929 to review the workings of the Constitution, recommended an alternative method for creating new states. It proposed that on receipt of a petition signed by at least twenty percent of the electors of an area not less in extent than Tasmania, the Commonwealth should set up a boundaries commission, call a Convention to draft a State Constitution and hold a referendum in the State concerned. If 60 percent of the electors in the area of the proposed New State and 40 percent of the people in the existing State as a whole approved then the Commonwealth Parliament should have the power to decide finally whether the New State should be established[1]. Nothing further was heard of this proposal, a common fate for the recommendations of Royal Commissions throughout the British Commonwealth!

In Queensland most of the new state activity was between 1850 and 1922. The northern Queensland movement was reactivated in 1948. However, in N.S.W. activity in the northern part of the State still persists. In 1954 "The Constituent Assembly of New England" was elected by the Inverell Convention. Its purpose was to clarify the legal steps to statehood, to devise a system of centralised administration for the New State, to encourage the investment of capital in the New State and to investigate the possibility of electing a permanent representative assembly of New England. Little

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[1] Ellis, pp.295-300

came of all of this since politics with a complete absence of power is pretty much of an inconsequential game. However, after the defeat of the 1967 referendum, the New State Movement announced in January 1968 that it would contest a number of northern seats at the State elections, all the seats concerned being held by Country Party members[1]. Although this caused much annoyance to the Country Party it has had no effect on the number of seats held since the Country Party candidates picked up the second and third preference votes of the New State Movement candidates. A similar situation faced the Liberal Party in Scotland and Wales in the 1974 elections, and in the absence of any system of transferable votes acted to the detriment of the Liberals.

Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party both first contested General Elections in 1929. The percentage of the vote obtained in each subsequent General Election is shown in table 16 together with that for the Liberal Party broken down by region.

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[1] Aitkin, p.97

Table 16

Percentage Vote - Liberal, Plaid Cymru and Scottish National Parties

General Election	Wales Plaid Cymru	Scotland Scottish National Party	Liberal Party Wales	Scotland	England	U.K.
1929	<0.1	0.1	33.5	18.1	23.6	23.6
1931	0.2	1.0	21.5	13.4	9.4	10.4
1935	0.3	1.3	18.0	6.7	6.3	6.8
1945	1.2	1.2	14.9	5.0	9.4	9.0
1950	1.2	0.4	12.6	6.6	9.4	9.1
1951	0.7	0.3	7.6	2.7	2.3	2.6
1955	3.1	0.5	7.3	1.9	2.6	2.7
1959	5.2	0.8	5.3	4.1	6.3	5.9
1964	4.8	2.4	7.3	7.6	12.1	11.2
1966	4.3	5.0	6.3	6.8	9.0	8.5
1970	11.5	11.4	6.8	5.5	7.9	7.5
(Feb) 1974	10.0	21.8	15.9	7.3	21.3	19.3
(Oct) 1974	10.8	30.4	15.5	8.3	20.2	18.4

Sources: F.W.S. Craig, British Parliamentary Election Statistics, 1918-1970 (2nd ed; Chichester; Political Reference Publications, 1970).

The Times. March 4, 1974 and October 14, 1974.

The Scottish National Party shows a steady doubling of support, or better, at each election since 1955 rising from 0.5 percent of the vote in 1955 to 21.8 percent in 1974. The large increase in actual votes from 1970 to February 1974 is mirrored by the modest increase in Liberal votes in Scotland in the same period, compared to England and Wales. The impact of the S.N.P. on the Liberal fortunes has been much more pronounced than for Plaid Cymru in Wales. The two principal reasons for this are probably that the Liberals have normally been relatively stronger in Wales than in Scotland and that Plaid Cymru places more emphasis on the cultural aspects

of its policy whereas the S.N.P. concentrates on the alleged economic deprivation of Scotland[1], which is more effective as a vote-getter.

There are considerable differences between the potential for nationalism in Wales and Scotland. Wales has been part of the United Kingdom for a very long time compared with Scotland. Scotland still retains its own national church, education system, legal system, banking system and system of local government. Both nationalist parties were founded in the aftermath of economic depression following the First World War, Plaid Cymru in 1925 and the S.N.P. in 1928. In some quarters comparisons have been made between these parties and the French Poujadist movement. However, the Poujadist movement had above average support from artisans, small businessmen, small farmers and others in the self-employed category. Both Plaid Cymru and the S.N.P. are basically 'Nationalist' in their appeal but with radical anti-capitalist overtones. The support for Plaid Cymru is at present mainly from farmers and middle class people, especially ministers of nonconformist churches, lawyers and teachers[2]. Most of its candidates were professional people, in the 1959 and 1966 General Elections nearly half the Plaid Cymru candidates were schoolteachers[3]. The Poujadist members of the French National Assembly in 1956 were mainly drawn from commercial occupations. The S.N.P. is relatively stronger among manual workers, in fact it has

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[1]W.P. Grant and R.J.C. Preece. "Welsh and Scottish Nationalism" Parliamentary Affairs. XXI(3) (Summer, 1968), 258

[2]Grant and Preece, p.258

[3]Ibid., p.259

greater support among skilled manual workers than either Labour or Conservative[1].

In both Wales and Scotland the Nationalist Parties attract a relatively larger proportion of voters under 45 than do the Liberals. One reason for this could be that the Liberals are identified with the 'system' against which both the young and the Nationalists are struggling.

A further factor in Scotland is the steady emigration from Scotland during the twentieth century, averaging 5.4% per decade[2]. The English joke that this is because Scotland is a good place to be from, but Scottish emigrants were the backbone of much Colonial administration and enriched many parts of the world with their doctors, teachers, lawyers and engineers. Both Wales and Scotland have a dependence on heavy declining industry and poor farming. In Scotland the average weekly income is approximately 15 percent lower than in England and the unemployment rate is usually double England's[3]. On the other hand there has been developments in nuclear power research at Dounreay, an aluminum smelter at Invergordon, a small auto industry and development area tax incentives. Unfortunately, the perennial economic woes of the United Kingdom lend credence to the nationalists' claim that they could not be worse off on their own.

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[1] Hanham, p. 189

[2] Ibid., p.17

[3] Ibid., p.30

Tables 17 and 18 shows the percentage swings from 1970 to February 1974 broken down by dominant party, excluding seats won in February 1974 by the SNP and Plaid Cymru.

Table 17

Percentage Swings in Scottish Seats

	Liberal Candidate in 1970 and February 1974			No Liberal Candidate in 1970
Swing From	Liberal Seats	Labour Seats	Conservative Seats	
Conservative	-3.0	-1.5	-2.4	-3.9
Labour	-2.2	-4.0	-4.0	-3.9
Liberal	+2.6	+1.7	+2.2	+5.0
S.N.P.	+2.7	+3.9	+4.2	+3.0
(N)	(2)	(2)	(9)	(3)

Table 18

Percentage Swings in Welsh Seats

	Liberal Candidate in 1970 and February 1974			No Liberal Candidate in 1970
Swing From	Liberal Seats	Labour Seats	Conservative Seats	
Conservative	-1.3	0.0	-1.8	-2.2
Labour	-0.6	-1.9	-3.2	-4.9
Liberal	+4.4	+2.3	+6.1	+8.1
Plaid Cymru	-2.5	-0.4	-1.1	-0.9
(N)	(2)	(8)	(5)	(7)

Tables 19 and 20 show the percentage swings in the seats won by the S.N.P. and Plaid Cymru in February 1974.

Table 19

Percentage Swings in Seats Won by S.N.P. in February 1974

Swing From	Seats Held by Conservatives in 1970	Seats Held by Labour in 1970
Conservatives	-4.8	-2.2
Labour	-6.7	-8.3
Liberal	-1.3	-1.0

Table 20

Percentage Swings in Seats Won by Plaid Cymru in February 1974
(Both seats won from Labour)

Swing from	%
Conservatives	-0.4
Labour	-3.1
Liberal	-0.8

These tables are very revealing. There is a completely different pattern in the relative voting between the Liberals and the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru. In all types of seats contested by the Liberals and Plaid Cymru, with only one type of exception, the Liberals substantially increased their vote and Plaid Cymru declined. The exception was the two seats actually won by Plaid Cymru where there was a slight decline in the Liberal vote. In both cases Plaid Cymru ran second to Labour in the 1970 election and there was obviously a feeling among some Conservatives and Liberals and a greater number of Labour supporters that here was an opportunity

to elect a third party member. However, these figures confirm what is also apparent from table 16 that the Plaid Cymru claim to third place, relative to the Liberals, weakened considerably in February 1974.

In Scotland, the situation is very different. The Liberals slightly improved their overall position but were dramatically overtaken by the Scottish National Party who laid clear claim to third place.

What then does the future hold? As Albinski[1] observes, with the Country Party well represented in the Queensland and N.S.W. Governments "spokesmanship and sympathetic state policy for the two regions is reasonably insured" and New State sentiment is unlikely to go to militant extremes that would seek to impose a secessionist solution. At the Federal level no amount of high-flown window-dressing, as typified by the following quotation, is likely to achieve any concrete changes. The Country Party "believes in the need for a policy of New States, whereby natural regions forming potential farmers' republics on the Jeffersonian pattern, such as the New England region of N.S.W. and North Queensland, would be carved out of the existing States to form new communities which would be ruled by farmers and would increase the power of the Country Party in the Federal Parliament"[2]. In order to make potential new states economically viable there would need to be a significant growth of secondary industries in country towns and there is no indication of this occurring.

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[1]Henry S. Albinski. Canadian and Australian Politics in Comparative Perspective. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.139

[2]J.D.B. Miller, Australian Government and Politics (2nd ed.; London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1961), p.78

The future of the Liberal Party in Wales and Scotland is more difficult to forecast. Much will depend on the attitude of the Nationalist Parties. If they foresaw a better chance, than in the past, of achieving a federation because of the new strength of the Liberals, then a really concerted electoral effort could produce sufficient Parliamentary strength to force either the Labour or Conservative Parties to make significant concessions. Perhaps the horrors of Northern Ireland might convince the English voters that a freely negotiated federation is better than Northern Ireland multiplied by three. With the present polarisation of British politics it is difficult to be hopeful that such a reasonable common-sense solution would find majority support.

CHAPTER 8

INFLUENCE OF THE ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

Political parties exist in order to determine who shall have the legislative and executive power in the physical region in which they operate. The electoral system is made up of laws concerning the qualifications required by a citizen before he can exercise his vote; the delineation of the boundaries of the voting districts; the system used to determine which candidates achieve recognition as representatives of the voter; and the whole range of election laws covering such matters as the secret ballot, frequency of elections, financial restrictions on electioneering costs, rules for nominating candidates and the like. In considering the electoral systems of Australia and Britain there are many points of similarity in the election laws and in voter qualifications. Two of the main differences are the existence of compulsory voting in Australian federal elections and various property requirements in voting for the upper houses of some states. The more significant differences are the extent of "gerrymandering" electoral district boundaries, prevalent in some Australian States, and the actual voting system - simple plurality in Britain, and single transferable vote in single member constituencies for the House of Representatives and proportional representation for the Senate in Australia.

What is the significance of this difference in voting system? After studying the 1964 general election results in Britain, Berrington

concluded that "if the Liberals were to obtain 30 percent of the total poll .... and the increase were spread over the whole country and drawn in equal proportions from the two main parties, they would still return no more than 30 M.P.'s"[1]. This conclusion has been substantiated in large part by the results of the two 1974 General Elections where the Liberals polled close on 20 percent of the total vote and elected less than 15 M.P.'s. Under-representation of this magnitude tends to induce a contempt for parliamentary electoral processes, particularly in a class-divided society under strong economic pressure. The Australian picture is very different. Butler, who has been responsible alone and with others for many studies of British election results, commented that "Australia has, to English eyes, an electoral system that offers a rich lode of analytic possibilities. So far much of the wealth remains unquarried and general commentaries on the Australian political situation are the poorer for it"[2]. Following the 1969 election the Country Party had 8.6 percent of the national vote, which gave it 16 percent of the seats in the House of Representatives. It fought only 26 seats (one-fifth of the total) and won 20 of them, in these contests it polled 44.8 percent of the vote, only 2.6 percent more than the ALP received in these seats[3]. We have here the most startling comparison between the two

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[1] H.B. Berrington. "The General Election of 1964". Journal of the Royal Statistical Society (Series A), 128 (1965), p.66

[2] David Butler. "Aspects of Australian Elections". The Australian Journal of Politics and History. XIV(1) April, 1968, p.23.

[3] Henry S. Albinski, Canadian and Australian Politics in Comparative Perspective. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.210.

minor parties under study, major over-representation for the Country Party and even more major under-representation for the British Liberal Party.

One reason for this difference lies in the different attitudes towards a minor party, by at any rate one of the major parties, in the two countries. In Australia in the 1920's the National Party leaders had recognised that the Country Party had established its right to exist in the party system[1]. The British Liberal Party and its voting supporters do not appear to have that right, at least not in the same way as Labour and Conservative supporters, who relatively elect in the order of ten times as many M.P.'s with their votes as do the Liberals with the same number of votes.

This problem of Liberal under-representation is compounded by the potentially even higher level of support indicated by the opinion polls. After the Orpington by-election victory in 1962, the National Opinion Poll showed Liberal support at 38 percent compared to 33 percent for Labour and only 29 percent for the Conservative[2]. In the Autumn of 1968, the Opinion Research Centre found that 52 percent of a sample replied 'Yes' to the question, "If you thought that Liberals stood a chance of forming a Government would you ever consider voting for them"[3]. Unfortunately for the Liberal Party nowhere near that percentage of voters considered that they had a chance

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[1]B.D. Graham. The Formation of the Australian Country Parties (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1966), p.295.

[2]Peter G.J. Pulzer. Political Representation and Elections: Parties and Voting in Great Britain. (New York: Praeger, 1967), p.98.

[3]David Butler and Donald Stokes. Political Change in Britain (London: Macmillan, 1969), p.320.

of forming the Government and therefore did not actually vote Liberal. However, it is indications of potential Liberal support of this magnitude that may well deter Labour and Conservative leaders from supporting any change in the electoral system, which could then prove potentially disastrous to themselves. Rae suggested that "electoral laws may create majorities where none are created by the voters"[1]. This is certainly true in Britain where only in 1931 and 1935 has the government party obtained more than 50 percent of the popular vote and in both cases the result was a landslide. Landslide results can be obtained even where the victorious party gets less than 50 percent of the national vote, as in the case of Labour in 1945. ('Landslide'is defined here as a seat majority of over 150).

Voting intention figures need to be viewed with some caution since "studies carried out in the United States suggested that the relative stability in the net figures for 'voting intention' masked much larger gross movements. For example the information that Labour's public opinion poll lead had increased from 3 percent to 6 percent did not indicate whether there had been a single transfer of 1.5 percent of the electorate from Conservative to Labour, or whether there had been a large movement from Labour to Conservative counterbalanced by an even larger movement in the opposite direction, or, as seemed more likely, a complex series of switches from 'Conservative' to 'Don't Know', 'Liberal' to 'Don't Know', etc. Conventional public opinion polls also gave little indication about the motives which had influenced the switches"[2].

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[1]Douglas W. Rae. The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws 2nd. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p.75.

[2]David Butler and Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, The British General Election of 1970 (London: Macmillan, St.Martin's Press, 1971), p.191.

Bonham in his study of the middle class vote in the early fifties, found that the 'floating vote' was difficult to define and was not a consistent grouping of the same people from one election to the next who all move in the same direction. In the three elections immediately after the Second World War as many as ten million people alternated between voting and non-voting for the main parties. He found that less than half the electorate were either regularly Conservative or regularly Labour in the 1945, 1950 and 1951 elections[1]. These comments illustrate that the potential for major party Liberal support does indeed exist, whether it can be harnessed is the real question and to what extent the present British electoral system prevents it will be examined in depth. In order to assess these points the electoral systems at present used in Australia and Britain are reviewed together with their results, particularly in recent years, as they affect the Country Party and the British Liberal Party. From this base the two systems will be evaluated against commonly accepted criteria of voting systems. Finally an attempt will be made to estimate the possible effect on Liberal Party electoral fortunes if the British system should be changed and also on the Country Party if the Australian system should be changed to the present British system.

The British electoral system is simple. The entire United Kingdom is divided into single member constituencies. In the vast majority of constituencies the size of the electorate is within ± 20 percent of the national average and there is no serious criticism from any party of deliberate gerrymandering of boundaries or of over or under representation on any rural/urban

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[1]John Bonham. The Middle Class Vote (London: Faber & Faber, 1954), p. 176.

basis. As mentioned earlier, for a variety of historical reasons Northern Ireland is deliberately under-represented and Scotland and Wales over-represented, but the overall effect is very slight. In any general election or by-election the successful candidate is the one who receives the most votes. In a straight fight, with only two candidates, the one with the most votes must also have an absolute majority, i.e. at least 50 percent of the total vote + 1. In a three-cornered contest, common where a minor party also runs a candidate, the winning candidate could win with 34 percent of the total vote, with the other two candidates each getting 33 percent. Theoretically this situation could become even more noticeable the greater the number of candidates. Again, in theory, one party could win every single seat by a small majority thus having slightly over 50 percent of the vote and leave all other parties unrepresented. In practice, because of the unevenness of party support throughout the country, there tends to be a balancing out. This balancing is far from perfect and the greater the spread in total popular vote between the two major parties the even greater the spread in the number of seats won, the so-called 'cube' law[1].

The actual percentage vote and the percentage of seats actually obtained in the House of Commons is shown on figure 5 for every British general Election from 1918 to October 1974. During this period the Conservative Party had every reason to be satisfied with the system since on only two occasions, 1945 and 1966, were they under-represented. The Labour Party has less reason to be satisfied, but even they have been over-represented on eight occasions (1923, 1929, 1945, 1950, 1964, 1966, 1970 and 1974). In only one of these elections, 1970, did they subsequently fail to form the Government. If one

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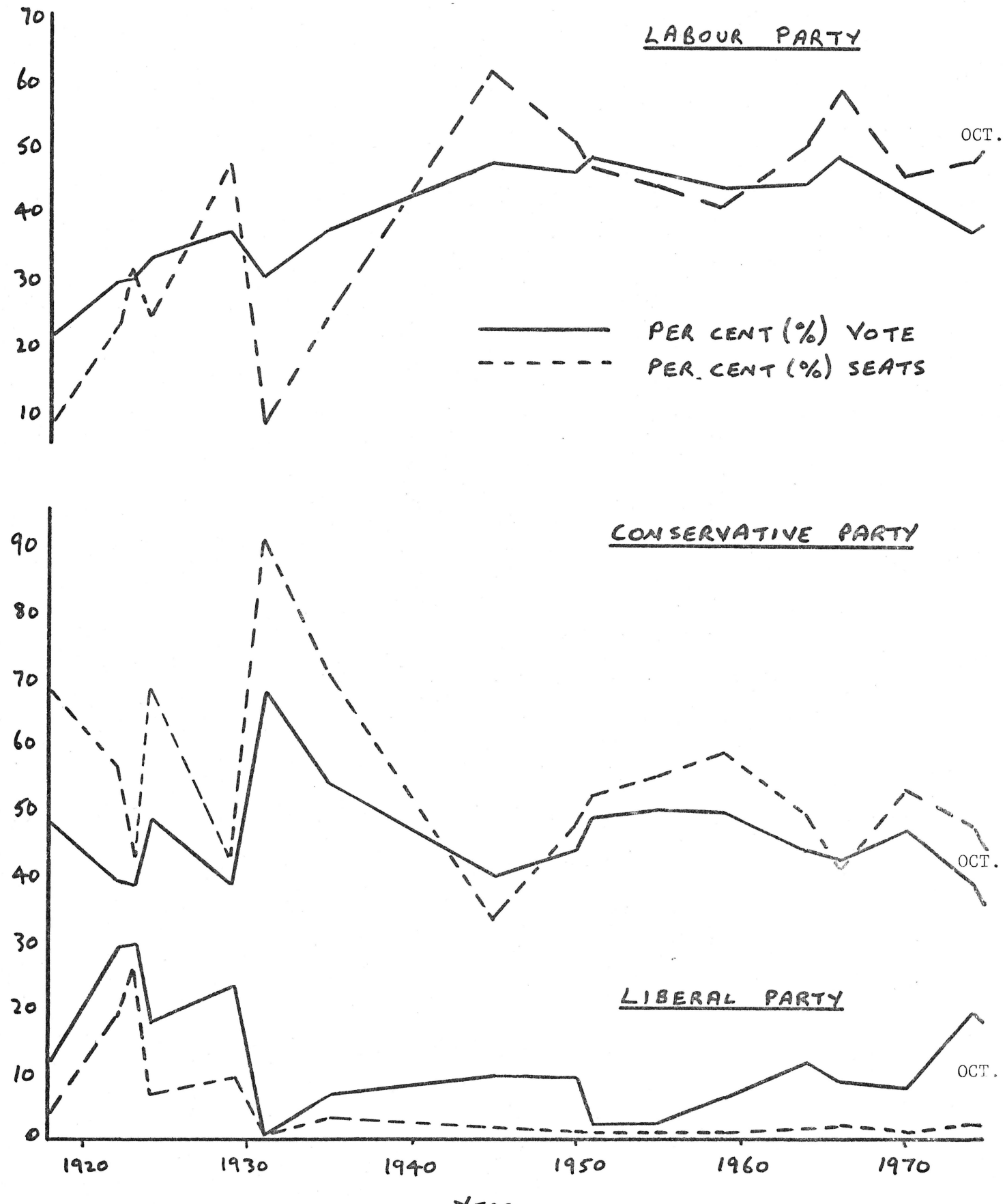
[1]The 'cube' law states that if the parties votes are in the proportions of A:B, their seats will be in the proportions of A^3:B^3.

FIGURE 5

PERCENT VOTE AND SEATS BY PARTY (U.K.)

Sources: As for table 16.



major party is over-represented in 87.5 percent of the elections and the other major party in 50.0 percent then some one or more parties must be under-represented. The sufferers have been the minor parties and particularly the Liberal Party who have never been over-represented in the period under study. If ± 20 percent margin in constituency electorate size is considered an acceptable variance when the vagaries of vote distribution are taken into account, then the maximum index of under-representation (see chapter 4, p.16) that should be considered as acceptable is 1.4. The greatest under-representation experienced by the Conservative Party in 1945 was under 1.2. The only times the Labour Party index of under-representation had exceeded 1.4 is in 1918 (2.5), 1931 (3.6) and 1935 (1.5). The only times the Liberal Party has been under-represented by less than 1.4 were in 1923 and 1931. During the past fifteen years the Liberal Party index of under-representation has never been under 4.5. Although this is a source of great concern to the Liberal Party I would suggest that it goes much further and should be a source of concern to anyone who professes a belief in democracy. Under-representation of this magnitude over a period of years should not be considered as acceptable by anyone and if it is so considered by the major parties then this would appear to be a prime illustration of their contempt for democratic processes which might adversely affect their own pursuit of power.

The Australian electoral system is considerably different. All the lower houses, both at the Federal and States level, are elected using the Single Transferable Vote (STV) with the exception of Tasmania. The Tasmanian Lower House and the Federal Senate are elected on a full proportional

representation system. The other upper houses, with the exception of New South Wales which has an indirectly elected Legislative Council, are elected using STV. Where STV is used there are single member constituencies and for a vote to be valid (or formal) the voter must mark an order of preference covering the full list of candidates. For example, if a seat was contested by the Liberals, Labor and Communists a staunch Liberal would have to show his second choice between Labor and Communist and so on for the other candidates. This can produce some strange results. In the 1961 General Election the Menzies Government finally retained office with a majority of one on the floor of the House because the last contest to be decided went to a Right-wing Liberal who gained an unexpectedly large and just sufficient proportion of Communist preferences[1]. An extreme case of the distribution of preferences arose in the 1966 Federal election for a Victoria seat. The incumbent ALP member received 47 percent of the first preferences against 29 percent for the Liberal, but the Liberal eventually won the seat on the preferences[2]. The ALP is opposed to both STV and PR. Basically this is because it is the most highly disciplined of the Australian parties and suffers from the way in which the present electoral system permits the less well disciplined non-Labor parties a 'second chance' to put together an anti-Labor vote. The system also gives Party rebels more leverage and such is the bitterness when the ALP splits that very few 'rebels' exercise their preferences in favour of the ALP. In the 1969 Queensland election 80 percent of Democratic Labor Party preferences

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[1] Crisp, p.173

[2] Albinski, p.271

went to the Liberals/Country Party and only 20 percent to the ALP[1]. D.L.P. preferences may well have cost the ALP the 1961 and 1969 Federal House of Representatives elections[2].

It is certainly the case that a large percentage of the changes produced by counting preferences has operated against the ALP. In the period 1937-1961 the percentages of changes on preferences that cost the ALP the seat where they led on first preferences are[3]:

Federal	71.7 percent
New South Wales	62.9
Victoria	93.2
South Australia	33.3
Western Australia	84.2

A particular issue may have a big influence on the disposition of preferences. In the 1969 election Australian involvment in the Vietnam war was a major issue and the DLP strongly supported this involvment as a means to stopping the spread of communism. This was in diametric opposition to the ALP and was a major reason for DLP preferences going so solidly to the Liberal/Country Party government candidates[4]. In this election the total

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[1] James Kelly. "Vote Weighting and Quota Gerrymanders in Queensland, 1931-1971". The Australian Quarterly. 43(2) (June 1971), p.43.

[2] Albinski, p.271.

[3] Joan Rydon. "Compulsory and Preferential - The Distinctive Features of Australian Voting Methods". Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies. VI(3) (November 1968), p.195.

[4] Malcolm Mackerras "Another Second Preference Government" The Australian Quarterly. (41(4) (December 1969), p.30

anti-Labor vote, based on counting all preferences, was less than the ALP vote but the Liberal/Country Party government still retained power with a 66 to 59 seat margin[1]. The main reason for this is that the ALP holds relatively more seats with large majorities and the Liberal/Country Party more seats with slim majorities. It is for this reason that, now that they are in power, the ALP is seeking to abolish preferential voting in order to prevent the resurrection of the DLP and weaken the Country Party, as planned whilst in opposition[2]. This may turn out to be short-sighted since in the long run, the ALP might fare better with a more equitable system of proportional representation.

It is also not at all certain that STV favours the Country Party to any great extent. As Joan Rydon showed[3] in her analysis of election results between 1937 and 1961 triangular contests (table 21) are not that common anyway.

Table 21

Changes on Preferences in Seats Contested by the Country Party 1937-1961

	Seats contested by Country Party	Triangular Contests	
		Total	Changed on Preferences
New South Wales	219	37	7
Victoria	221	75	15
Western Australia	143	22	6
Total	583	134	28

[1]Malcolm Mackerras "Another Second Preference Government" The Australian Quarterly 41(4) (December 1969), p.28

[2]Ibid., p.31

[3]Rydon, p.196.

Only 23 percent of the total seats contested were triangular contests and in only just over one fifth of these seats, or less than five percent of the total number, was the result changed as a result of counting the preferences. Admittedly the ALP fared worst on these changes, but over half the cases reported were in Victoria where, at different times the Country Party was granted immunity by the Liberals and at other times by the ALP. When this immunity was withdrawn and triangular contests became more common after 1950 the Country Party fared worst, not the ALP, and lost much of its strength in the state[1].

Strictly speaking it is only in Victoria that a genuine three party system is common. Tasmania and South Australia have been predominantly two party and in the other states the normal line up is a Liberal/Country Party coalition opposed to the ALP. The percentage of votes and corresponding percentage of seats in the House of Representatives during the period 1919 to 1974 is shown for the Liberal, Country and Australian Labor Parties in figure 6. This clearly shows that the only party in this period to be consistently over-represented in terms of seats is the Country Party. The index of over-representation for the Country Party in each general election for the lower Federal house is shown in table 22.

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[1] Rydon, p.197

FIGURE 6

PERCENT VOTE AND SEATS BY PARTY (AUSTRALIA)

Sources: As for figure 1.

-------- percent seats

———— percent vote

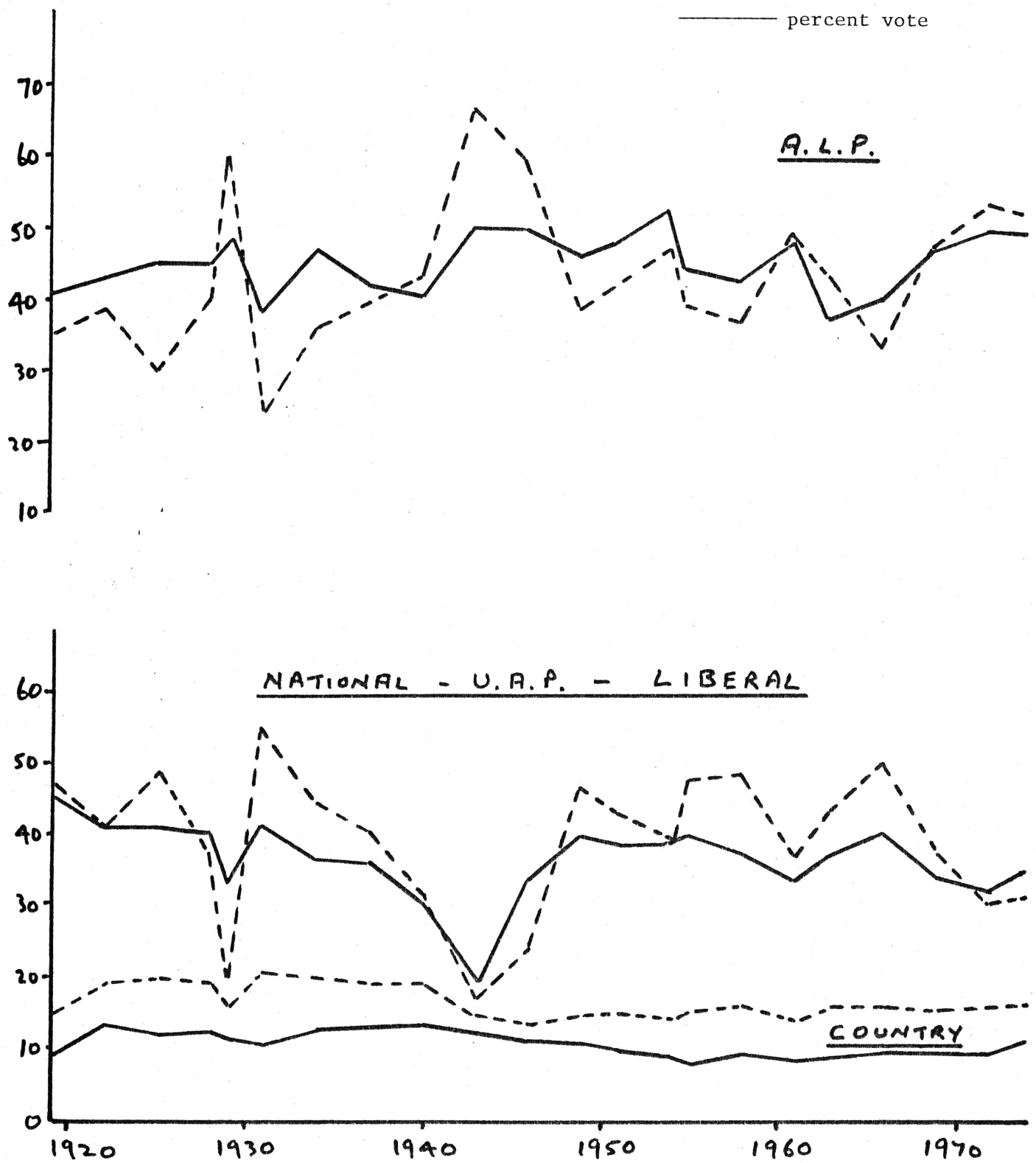

Table 22

Index of Over-Representation for the Country Party
1919-1974

(Federal House of Representatives)

General Election Year	Index of Over-Representation
1919	1.67
1922	1.46
1925	1.67
1928	1.52
1929	1.39
1931	1.91
1934	1.54
1937	1.42
1940	1.38
1943	1.21
1946	1.24
1949	1.41
1951	1.51
1954	1.59
1955	1.90
1958	1.72
1961	1.65
1963	1.80
1966	1.63
1969	1.58
1972	1.70
1974	1.54

The percent vote and percent seats for each of the three main parties is shown, for the period 1919 to 1974 on figure 6. The variations in the percentage vote from election to election are magnified greatly in terms of percentage of seats actually won. A comparison between figures 5 and 6 shows no significant difference in terms of the distortion of percent seats to percent votes. The single transferable vote, as used in Australia, has certainly not achieved 'proportional' representation.

In the twenty-two general elections since 1919 the ALP has received the largest vote for a particular party no fewer than eighteen times. It has won a majority of seats on only five occasions. The ALP has been under-represented in terms of seats to votes, fourteen times with a maximum index of under-representation of 1.58 (in 1931) and an average index of under representation of 1.09. The National Party / U.A.P./Liberal Party has been under-represented only six times, including the 1972 and 1974 elections, but on average has been over-represented with an index of 1.04. The Country Party has been consistently over-represented, with an average index of over-representation of 1.57. In the light of these figures it is difficult indeed to accept Crisp's conclusion that "on the whole however, preferential voting in single-member electorates for the House of Representatives has given substantial satisfaction"[1].

Obviously the Country Party has good reason to be satisfied though, as will be discussed later, their electoral success is by no means wholly attributable to STV. The Liberal Party may have been satisfied until very recently but there is very little reason for the ALP to be satisfied. As Lipson observes STV is appropriate to a tri-party system wherein two of the parties were normally expected to coalesce against the third[2]. It is very doubtful whether STV alone is the best system from the point of view of the

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[1] Crisp, p.122

[2] L. Lipson "Party Systems in the United Kingdom and the Older Commonwealth: Causes, Resemblances, and Variations". Political Studies VII (1959), pp.12-31.

British Liberal Party, since the idea of any permanent arrangement with only one major party is anathema. However, in Australia we have yet to see a party or a group of candidates bargaining their preferences back and forth from one party to another or using them selectively, to favour particular candidates or policies[1]. If this was done in Britain with STV the effects are unpredictable but could be significant. Obviously a party's influence would be much greater if it could deliver preference votes in either direction, particularly in marginal seats.

The same pattern of consistent Country Party over representation, and varying degrees of both under and over representation for the Liberals and ALP, are also apparent in various State elections[2]. However, in no case does the extent of either under or over representation, for the Liberals, Country Party and ALP, approach the degree of under representation of the British Liberal Party (see table 4). If the Democratic Labor Party is included in the comparison, the picture changes, since in spite of a maximum DLP vote of over nine percent in 1958 the DLP has never been able, in spite of STV, to elect a single member to the House of Representatives. As with the British Liberal Party the DLP vote is relatively evenly spread across the country and consequently their supporters are effectively disenfranchised except in the sense of being able to use their preferences negatively against the ALP.

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[1] Rydon, p.194

[2] Malcolm Mackerras "The New South Wales Election, February 1971. The Australian Quarterly. 43(2) (June 1971), pp.31-34. Also Kelly, p.41.

The results of the February 1974 British General Election and the May 1974 double dissolution elections in Australia illustrate some changes in electoral trends in both countries.

In Britain the Liberal vote in February 1974 was the largest it had achieved in England since 1929, in Wales since 1935, in Scotland since 1964 and in the country as a whole since 1929. The Liberal Party fielded 517 candidates, four more than in 1929 and the largest number in the whole period under review since 1918. The paltry return in terms of seats of fourteen was the largest number won at a general election since 1935, when twenty-one seats were won with a third of the 1974 percentage vote. As is shown in table 23, there was a marked increase in the number of seats where the Liberal ran second.

Table 23

Second Place Finishes by Liberal Party Candidates (U.K.)

General Election Year	Liberal Second behind Conservative	Liberal Second behind Labour	Total Second Place
1966	22	7	29
1970	20	7	27
1974 (February)	125	19	144
1974 (October)	91	4	95

In view of the number of forfeited deposits in other general elections since 1945 it must have been particularly gratifying for the Liberals to lose fewer deposits than Labour in February 1974.

The October 1974 results were a definite setback but far from a disaster. In the seats where the Liberal ran second behind the Conservative, the Conservative majority was reduced, compared to February, in 51 cases (in 23 of these cases the Conservative majority was over 10,000; in 16, between five and ten thousand; and in the remaining twelve under five thousand).

In a party with fairly evenly spread support the failure to contest seats does not give a true indication of total electoral support. Table 24 shows the average Liberal percentage vote per candidate.

Table 24

Average Liberal Percentage Vote per Candidate, 1950-1974 (U.K.)

General Election Year	Average Liberal % Vote per Candidate
1950	11.8
1951	14.7
1955	15.1
1959	16.9
1964	18.5
1966	16.1
1970	13.5
1974 (February)	23.3
1974 (October)	19.1

The importance of maintaining a steady constituency base was underlined by Berrington who found[1] that the Liberals polled 20.8 percent of the vote in seats they contested in both 1964 and 1959, compared to 16.1 percent

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[1] Berrington, p.34

in seats contested in 1964 but not 1959. This difference of 4.7 percent was considerably larger than the increase of 1.6 percent in the average Liberal vote per candidate. Getting established in a constituency normally takes time. In 1970 the Liberals entered candidates in 85 constituencies where they had no candidate in 1966 and took second place in only one of them. Maintaining the same candidate appears to have little effect as is shown in tables 25(a) and 25(b), which confirms other studies in Britain showing the relative unimportance of the candidate as an individual. The analysis was restricted to constituencies where there had been no change or only minor changes in boundaries between 1970 and February 1974, with three-cornered contests.

Table 25(a)

Seats Contested 1970 and February 1974 by Same Liberal Candidates

Won by	Number of seats	Liberal Second in		% Swing from Cons. to Lib.	% Swing from Lab. to Lib.
		1970	1974		
Liberal	2	0	0	4.2	5.2
Labour	6	0	0	3.8	2.3
Conservative	14	3	8	3.3	3.3

Table 25(b)

Seats Contested 1970 and February 1974 by Different Liberal Candidates

Won by	Number of seats	Liberal Second in		% Swing from Cons. to Lib.	% Swing from Lab. to Lib.
		1970	1974		
Liberal	3	0	0	4.6	3.7
Labour	32	0	2	3.6	2.0
Conservative	81	6	45	3.6	3.1

The 1970 general election results were a low point for the Liberal Party in twenty years. Table 26 shows the results for seats contested by the Liberals in February 1974 but not in 1966 or 1970. Table 27 shows the results for seats contested by the Liberals in 1966 and February 1974 but not in 1970. All of the analyses of the 1974 election results are confined to seats where there was no change, or only minor changes, in boundaries from 1966 or 1970. This was true of a total of 249 constituencies that were contested in February 1974 by Conservative, Labour and Liberal candidates. The percentage swings in tables 26 and 27 were calculated from 1966 to 1974.

Table 26

Results in Seats Contested by Liberal in February 1974 but not in 1966 or 1970

Won by	Number of Seats	Liberal Second in	% Swing from Cons. to Lib.	% Swing from Lab. to Lib.
Labour	33	2	3.5	5.9
Conservative	13	2	3.6	8.3

Table 27

Results in Seats Contested by Liberal in 1966 and February 1974 but not in 1970

Won by	Number of Seats	Liberal Second in	% Swing from Cons. to Lib.	% Swing from Lab. to Lib.
Labour	6	0	1.4	3.4
Conservative	11	3	1.1	6.0

There is naturally a larger swing from both Conservative and Labour to Liberal when the starting point is zero, as in table 26. Where there was

no Liberal candidate in 1966 the Liberal support was completely hidden. The significance lies in the markedly higher swing from Labour to Liberal than from Conservative to Liberal regardless of when the Liberal last contested the seat. The overall average swing, in the 83 constituencies considered in tables 26 and 27, was 2.2 percent from Conservative to Liberal and 6.5 percent from Labour to Liberal, or three times as many votes from Labour as from the Conservatives to the Liberals. This is markedly different from earlier elections. Berrington found[1] that in the 1964 election the Liberal vote was drawn equally from Labour and Conservatives in most regions except south-east and south-west England where 28 percent came from the Conservatives and 62 percent from Labour. Butler and Stokes considered[2] that in both 1964 and 1966 the Liberal vote seemed to have little preferential impact on either Labour or Conservative. It is also very noticeable that the Labour swing to the Liberals was more pronounced in seats won by the Conservatives. This had also been observed in earlier elections and Berrington found[3] that in 1964 the Liberal vote was drawn to a disproportionate extent from the minority party and to a greater extent the safer the seat. However, in the February 1974 election this no longer was true of the Conservative swing which was not significantly higher in Labour won seats.

Liberal improvement was not completely uniform, as average figures

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[1]Berrington, p.41

[2]Butler and Stokes, pp.335-336

[3]Berrington, p.42

might indicate. In three constituencies contested by the Liberals in 1966 and February 1974 (Bosworth, Bolton West and Stretford) there was actually a small swing (averaging 1.3 percent) from Liberal to Conservative. The impact of the Liberal Party is thus not uniform and this makes the prediction of their future fortunes doubly difficult.

Although the Liberals, in the February 1974 election, took relatively more votes from Labour supporters they are more of a threat to the Conservatives. This is shown by the very much larger number of seats where they ran second to the Conservatives (125) compared with Labour (19) (see table 23). It is also shown by the type of seat in which they did well compared to 'safe' Conservative and 'safe' Labour seats. 'Safe' is here defined as more than 60 percent of the constituency vote for Conservative, 65 percent for Labour and 'strong' Liberal as more than 30 percent. This gives approximately equal number of seats for each party, under these classifications. 1966 Census data[1] by constituency, has been used on a percentage basis from the following categories: (tables 28(a), (b) and (c).

- Non-manual
- Professional and Managerial
- Owner Occupiers
- Council Tenants
- With full plumbing

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[1] 1966 Census: General and Parliamentary Tables, H.M.S.O. November 1969, in David Butler and Michael Pinto - Duschinsky. The British General Election of 1970 (London: Macmillan , 1971), pp.358-379.

- With cars
- Born in the New Commonwealth, i.e. excluding Australia, Canada and New Zealand
- Young voters, the proportion who, in April 1966, were between 15 and 19 and who in 1974 would be between 23 and 27
- Retired, defined as the proportion of the male population over 15 who were recorded as retired in the 1966 census.

Table 28(a) shows the average percentages for all 630 constituencies and for 'safe' Labour and Conservative and 'strong' Liberal seats in 1974.

Table 28(a)

Average Percentages by Census Category (U.K.)

	Number of Seats	Non Manual	Prof. & Mgr.	Owner Occup.	Council Ten.	Full Plbg.	With Cars	New C/W	Young Voters	Retired
U.K.	630	32.6	15.3	44.0	27.7	73.1	43.6	1.7	10.2	10.8
Safe Labour	42	19.5	7.1	26.1	40.4	62.0	30.5	1.9	10.9	10.5
Safe Conservative	42	47.9	25.5	53.3	15.1	81.7	52.7	2.0	9.3	12.6
Strong Liberal	39	40.3	20.8	51.8	19.1	79.6	52.6	1.2	9.6	12.4

In every single category except one, Labour and Conservatives are opposite sides of the national average with the averages in the strong Liberal seats also opposite to Labour, between Labour and Conservative and closer to the Conservative averages than to Labour. The one exception is among new immigrants where Liberals do best where, relatively, the proportion of new immigrants is lowest and lower than Labour, Conservative or the

national average. This could be due to a number of factors. Immigrants are concentrated in inner City areas where Liberals do poorly and therefore do not show up as strongly Liberal constituencies. New Commonwealth immigrants are much less likely to have any historical, family or cultural links with British Liberalism. It is of passing interest that the racial 'mix' does not seem to be at all decisive in determining whether a constituency is likely to be 'safe' for either Labour or Conservatives.

However, averages can be misleading and tables 28(b) and 28(c) show the maximum and minimum percentages in each census category.

Table 28 (b)

Maximum Percentages by Census Category (U.K.)

	Non Manual	Prof. & Mgr.	Owner Occup.	Council Ten.	Full Plbg	With Cars	New C/W	Young Voters	Retired
Safe Labour	30.0	11.3	50.3	67.9	87.9	44.2	13.3	14.0	15.3
Safe Conservative	87.6	41.5	74.8	39.4	96.5	73.6	9.5	11.1	29.8
Strong Liberal	87.6	32.3	72.6	31.0	89.5	66.8	2.8	11.5	26.4

Table 28 (c)

Minimum Percentages by Census Category (U.K.)

Safe Labour	12.0	5.2	1.6	11.4	35.2	12.1	0.1	8.7	6.5
Safe Conservative	27.9	12.5	8.2	1.6	64.2	31.7	0.2	6.3	4.7
Strong Liberal	23.7	8.6	30.2	5.8	62.4	29.6	0.1	8.1	8.5

The maximum and minimum figures underline that the Liberals are not strong in areas with large proportions of new immigrants. However,

Liberal strength is very similar to Conservative in constituencies with comparable percentages of non-manual workers but, if anything, their strength is concentrated more in areas with significant numbers of owner occupiers, the hallmark of the middle class and, to a growing extent, the skilled manual. Perhaps surprising is that there is not a great difference between the parties because of the proportion of young voters, if anything in favour of Labour, but probably because this census grouping is relatively evenly distributed. Both Liberals and Conservatives do relatively better than Labour in constituencies with higher than average numbers of retired people. Many of the retired have small private pensions or investment income and may feel that Labour is unsympathetic to their interests in these fields.

A voter 'Constituency Class Index' can be constructed by adding, for any given constituency, the percentages of non-manual, professional and managerial and owner occupiers together and subtracting the percentage of council tenants. For example Bromley (Orpington) had 60.3 percent non-manual, 32.3 percent professional and managerial, 61.4 percent owner occupiers and 15.5 percent council tenants to give a Constituency Class Index of 60.3 + 32.3 + 61.4 - 15.5 = 138.5.

Table 29 shows the average, maximum and minimum Constituency Class Index (CTI) for all the English seats that can be classified as Strong Liberal, Safe Labour or Safe Conservative in the February 1974 Election. The analysis was restricted to the English seats to eliminate the effect of the Scottish Nationalist and Plaid Cymru votes. The analysis was done for seats with little or no change in electoral boundaries since 1966.

Table 29

Constituency Class Index for Safe Labour, Safe Conservative and Strong Liberal Constituencies, 1974

	Labour			Liberal			Conservative		
	Max.	Ave.	Min.	Max.	Ave.	Min.	Max.	Ave.	Min.
Inner London Boroughs	42.9	- 7.8	-34.1	-	-	-	128.4	116.5	108.1
English Boroughs	51.8	10.6	-17.2	152.9	102.7	42.1	151.0	115.6	62.4
English Countries	57.5	25.2	- 5.0	145.9	89.8	44.0	169.6	108.1	51.4
Combined	57.5	12.3	-34.1	152.9	93.8	42.1	169.6	111.6	51.4
(N) =		42			39			42	

For comparative purposes the average CTI for all constituencies is 64.2 and for the 123 constituencies analysed in table 29 is 71.8. The average CTI in table 29 clearly shows the class basis of party strength. The figures for Labour and Conservative are not surprising, but those for Liberal are unexpected. The CTI's for the strong Liberal constituencies are only marginally less than for the safe Conservative seats which indicates that the two parties are basically competing for many of the same seats. It must be remembered though that there are over five hundred other seats at stake and they are mostly in the more central part of the CTI spectrum.

There is some overlap between the maximum Labour CTI's and the minima for the Conservatives and Liberals, though this is not very significant. Only six out of the 42 Labour seats exceed the minimum Liberal CTI of 42.1 and only two of the strong Liberal constituencies are below the maximum Labour CTI of 57.5. Relative to the Conservatives only four of the Labour seats have a CTI below the Conservative minimum of 51.4 and only two

of the safe Conservative seats have a CTI below the maximum Labour figure. Only three of the 39 Liberal constituencies have a CTI below that of the minimum for a strong Conservative seat.

The other matter of interest, and of concern, is the very wide spread from the minimum Constituency Class Index of minus 34.1 for Bermondsey, where the Conservative candidate polled 23.1 percent of the vote in a straight fight with Labour, to a CTI of 169.6 for Surrey East where the Conservative won in 1974 with a 62.0 percent vote in a three-cornered fight against both Liberal and Labour candidates who almost equally shared the remaining votes. This spread is almost plus and minus 100 points either side of the national average and is a graphic commentary on the two nations concept of a class divided society.

Another fact that illustrates Labour weakness in Liberal held seats is that out of the fourteen Liberal seats won in February 1974, the Labour candidates lost their deposits in exactly half of them. This included a crushing defeat in Cornwall (North) where the Labour candidate polled a mere 3.9 percent of the vote in a three cornered fight won by the Liberals with 57.9 percent of the vote. If the Liberals are to achieve their goal of a less class-divided society they still have a very considerable way to go in terms of making significant inroads into areas of traditional Labour strength.

The 1974 Federal elections in Australia were primarily of interest because of the virtual disappearance of the Democratic Labor Party from the Federal scene. In the aftermath of the double dissolution they lost their five Senate seats. The results for the House of Representatives are shown in table 30.

Table 30

Percentage Vote, House of Representatives (1974)[1]

(Figures in brackets represent percent change from previous general election in 1972

	A.L.P.	Liberal Party	Country Party	D.L.P.	Australia Party	Other	In-formal	Turn-out
National	49.3(-0.3)	34.9(+ 2.9)	10.7(+1.3)	1.4(-3.9)	2.3(-0.1)	1.2(- 0.1)	1.9	95.0
NSW	52.7(+0.8)	33.2(+ 3.3)	10.6(+0.8)	0 (-3.5)	2.8(-0.5)	0.4(- 1.2)	1.6	94.6
Victoria	47.8(+0.5)	36.4(+ 2.8)	7.4(0)	5.1(-3.3)	2.4(+0.3)	0.5(- 0.7)	2.0	95.7
Queensland	44.0(-3.2)	30.4(+ 4.9)	23.5(+3.9)	0 (0)	1.7(0)	0.1(- 5.9)	1.3	94.8
S.Australia	48.6(-2.0)	36.5(- 4.8)	4.1(+1.9)	0 (-3.7)	2.0(+1.0)	8.6(+ 7.4)	2.7	96.2
W.Australia	46.3(+0.2)	41.3(+ 2.0)	10.7(+2.4)	0 (-4.5)	1.2(+0.1)	0.3(- 0.4)	2.5	94.4
Tasmania	55.1(-3.8)	44.3(+ 9.5)	0 (0)	0 (-4.8)	0.1(-0.4)	0.3(- 0.7)	1.7	96.5
A.C.T.	55.5(+3.4)	35.5(+12.7)	3.5(+3.5)	0 (-3.6)	4.4(+4.4)	0.9(-20.6)	1.3	93.0

The DLP only ran candidates of its own in Victoria. The main beneficiaries from the absence of DLP candidates clearly appear to be the Liberals and the Country Party. The large increase in the 'Other' column represents the votes for the Liberal Movement in South Australia. Even with compulsory voting the total vote still falls five percent short of a complete turnout. The percentage informal vote, which covers both deliberate and accidental spoilt ballots, indicates that the complexities of marking an STV ballot are not that great, though the Australian voter now has many years experience with this system. The percentage of informal votes was much higher in the Senate elections, ranging from 6 percent in Queensland to over 12 percent in NSW. Some of this is deliberate, where the voter may not think very much of any of the candidates, some is also no doubt due to the difficulty, for some voters, of remembering the names of his party's candidates. Candidates

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[1]Australia, Australian Information Service, Canberra, Bulletin 6 June 1974.

names are listed alphabetically and there has been a number of studies on the so-called 'donkey vote' where an elector numbers his choices 1 to 10 from the top of the ballot to the bottom. If this is a source of concern it would not appear to be that difficult to determine the order on the ballot paper by lot after nominations had closed.

After its return to power the ALP government, at the first joint sitting in Australian history, pushed through an electoral reform bill by 96 to 91 votes[1]. This bill, and its intent and possible effects, will be discussed more fully in the final chapter. However, it is interesting to note that where a major party feels it is in its own interests to effect an electoral reform, which may well be justified, it will go to extreme lengths to effect it. A minor party, which may well have an even stronger case for reform, is by its very nature powerless, which only serves to substantiate a view that politics is concerned with power, and the exercise of power, not justice. This, in a way, is the ultimate irony since democratic politicians express great concern about respect for the rule of law. The two views are only reconcilable if one adopts the cynic's attitude that there is no relationship between law and justice. There is obviously, therefore, some relationship between an electoral system and its appropriateness. Mackenzie has outlined[2] the basic criteria of voting systems and these are outlined below:

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[1] The Montreal Star, August 6, 1974, p.A-5

[2] W.J.M. Mackenzie. Free Elections. (New York: Rinehart, 1958), pp.69-71.

(a) Do they produce a good quality of member?

(b) How close is the relationship between the member and the constituency that elected him?

(c) Does the system produce a collectively effective assembly? Is it possible for the assembly elected to do the business required of it? Does the voting system tend to strengthen or weaken the party system? Does it promote party discipline among the electorate and in the assembly? How does it affect the number of parties and the possibility of lasting coalitions between them?

(d) How accurately does it reflect opinion?

(e) The attitude of electors in voting. Does it 'educate' them in the practice of 'democracy'? Should the voter be forced to take a narrow but effective decision by limiting his freedom of choice to a small number of pre-determined options?

(f) Public confidence. Does the system inspire public confidence in its fairness and effectiveness?

(g) How are vacancies or by-elections filled? Can be from a 'reserve' list (often found in municipal elections) or by further elections, which are an indication of current opinion in the constituency.

(h) Political possibility. Existing systems may be used to defend existing regimes.

How then do the present systems in Australia and Britain compare and particularly how do they compare in relation to the Country Party and the British Liberal Party?

(a) Quality of member is difficult if not impossible, to assess objectively. Quality of leaders in both countries and in all parties has often been high. The quality of members is more related to their power within the legislative chamber rather than to the electoral system alone, for example the powers and prestige of United States Senators. If the quality of Country Party back-benchers has not appeared high this may be more a reflection of their limited objectives than an assessment of their personal qualities. Rigid party discipline, caucus or Whip power, inhibits independent thinking in any party.

(b) Both lower houses are based on single member constituencies in both countries. The population of the electorates in both countries is comparable but the geographic size of some Australian electorates is immense. Australian Senators are elected on a state-wide basis so that they are relatively less close to the electorate. With the present day mass media it is doubtful whether this factor is of any great significance.

(c) Judging the effectiveness of legislatures is also well nigh impossible. Is their merit in being able to pass bad legislation quickly? There is no evidence of government instability in either Britain or Australia at either the Federal or State

level to match that of Italy or France under the Third and Fourth Republics. There is no evidence that preferential voting increases either the number of parties or the number of candidates[1]. In the period 1937 to 1961, the average number of candidates per seat in Federal elections was 2.90 compared to 2.95 in Britain in the period 1964 to 1974. Part of the reason for this is the relatively large number of uncontested seats in Australia, something virtually unknown in Britain. In State elections the average number of candidates per seat has been even lower, less than 2.0 in South Australia during the same period. Party discipline is high in both Australia and Britain. However, there have been major splits in the ALP and in the major Australian conservative party, this may be due more to the Australian character than to the voting system. Although there have been periods of coalition instability, as was discussed in chapter 3 coalitions have been commonplace among the anti-Labor parties at both the Federal level and most of the States.

(d) In terms of relfecting opinion both systems produce inequities. A major over-representation of the Country Party is matched by an even greater under-representation of the DLP in Australia and of the British Liberal Party. This reflects the inadequacies of both systems in terms of equity of representation, which

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[1] Rydon, p.194.

might be considered by some to be the very essence of a democratic system.

(e) The Australian system is probably more effective in educating the voter who must indicate his preferences. The use of 'how-to-vote' cards, common in Australia, is in many respects an insult to the voter's intelligence. However, the voter is under no obligation to follow their instructions. The British system is simplistic and has virtually become a choice between two parties and in practice between the two leaders. Both major parties make common reference to 'don't waste your vote' by voting for a minor party and particularly by voting for the Liberal candidate. If 'one man-one vote' has any real meaning then no person's vote should ever be 'wasted'. The exhortations of 'don't waste your vote' are a plain admission of the inequity of the system and should be a cause of shame to those who utter them. A recognition of this shame on the part of those concerned has not been discernible to-date.

(f) Public confidence is closely allied to (e) above. This confidence is more likely to be eroded the greater the distortions in representation. It may not affect the staunch supporter of the major parties but is likely to increasingly disenchant the minor party and independent voters. If this is coupled with major social divisions and serious economic problems it may well not be an overstatement to view an inequitable electoral system as another significant threat to democratic institutions themselves.

(g) In both Britain and Australia lower house vacancies are filled from by-elections which are simple to arrange in single member constituencies. As was seen in chapter 3 Australian Senate vacancies are filled by some fairly questionable practices, though admittedly multi-member electorates are more difficult to handle.

(h) Political possibility is a very real factor in both countries. The ALP have made changes which may not make the end result any more equitable in absolute terms but hopefully, for the ALP, will be less advantageous for some of their opponents and produce different inequities. In Britain, it certainly appears true that the existing Conservative/Labour regimes are maintaining the existing system for their own benefit, since the degree of Liberal under-representation has reached a point as to be almost ludicrous with the Liberals, in the last several elections requiring eight to ten votes to elect their M.P.'s compared to the single value votes of both Labour and Conservative. As Enid Lakeman commented[1] "it is hard to see why people who think it right to take pains to make votes equal as between people living in different places are unwilling to do anything to make votes equal as between people who vote for different parties". She points out that all Conservative voters

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[1]Enid Lakeman. "A Case for Electoral Reform". Contemporary Review 217(1255) (August 1970), p.58

> in South Shields have had their vote "unemployed" right back to the very creation of their constituency by the first Reform Act of 1832 and that the same is also true of all Labour supporters in the "stockbroker belt" round London since their party was founded[1].

Where then do matters stand and what could be done? The British Liberal Party stated its policy on electoral reform in its February 1974 Election Manifesto[2], "Liberals would introduce proportional representation by the single transferable vote for all elections. The present electoral system buttresses the discredited 'two-party system' of confrontation. Electoral reform, while giving fairer representation to different sectors, will make cooperation between them easier. The success of proportional representation in Northern Ireland in uniting a divided community through a power-sharing Executive is strong testimony for its introduction in Britain as a whole to heal the rifts of our society". The reference to Northern Ireland might appear unfortunate. However, it was the very success of proportional representation in giving the Catholic minority a proportional rôle in executive power that produced the extremist reaction. It would appear more logical to condemn the extremist reaction than to condemn the electoral system if the concern is with the recognition of the democratic rights of minorities.

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[1] Enid Lakeman. "A Case for Electoral Reform". Contemporary Review 217(1255) (August 1970), pp.58-59.

[2] Keesings Contemporary Archives, 1974, pp.26376/7.

The Liberal enthusiasm for STV is hard to understand. Butler estimated[1] the consequences of STV and true PR for the Liberal Party and his estimates have been consolidated into table 31.

Table 31

The Consequences for the British Liberal Party of STV and PR 1923-1959

Year	Actual Result	Under STV	Under PR
1923	159	217	182
1924	40	74	108
1929	59	137	143
1931	37[a]	42	62
1935	21	24	41
1945	12	22	58
1950	9	16	57
1951	6	11	16
1955	6	11	17
1959	6	10	37

[a]: Includes National Liberals.

For the 1966 election Pulzer quotes[2] two results for STV of 33 and 39 seats compared to the twelve seats actually won by the Liberals and 54 under true PR. Immediately after the 1974 election 'The Times' stated[3] "it has been calculated that, with six million votes, the list system would have given the Liberal about 125 seats, and the single transferable vote would

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[1] D.E. Butler. The Electoral System in Britain Since 1918 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp.191 and 194.

[2] Peter G.J. Pulzer. Political Representation and Elections (New York: Praeger, 1967), p.56.

[3] The Times. March 4, 1974

have given them 33 seats". 'The Times' then went on to say that the minimum the Liberals would now accept would be "single transferable vote in multi-member constituencies in cities and boroughs, and the alternative vote in rural constituencies" (per unanimous recommendation of the 1916 Speaker's Conference). In the light of the above figures the Liberals, if given the chance, should certainly not settle for less. In fact, in my view the Liberals would be best advised to press for a system similar to that operating in West Germany.

The West German system was developed after the Second World War with the twin goals of encouraging equitable representation and discouraging small extremist parties. These goals could almost be said to be universally applicable. The system has been slightly amended since its inception in 1949 but is basically a mixture of single member constituency and 'list' system. Half the seats are in single-member constituencies won on the simple 'first-past-the-post' system as used at present in Britain, Canada and the United States. The other half of the seats are awarded under the d'Hondt procedure for the total number of seats by application to party 'lists'. This has quite an impact on electoral strategy since if a party succeeds in electing a disproportionate number of its candidates in the single constituency contests it may end up entitled to no list seats and this did in fact happen in North Rhine-Westphalia in 1966 to the Social Democrats[1].

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[1] David P. Conradt. "Electoral Law Politics in West Germany". Political Studies. XVIII(3) (September 1970), p.342.

In order to secure 'list representation' a party must achieve five percent of the national vote and win at least three single-constituency seats directly. Obviously the larger parties benefit because of the 'wasted' votes for those parties that receive less than 5 percent of the total and/or fail to win three seats. It is of interest to see how the two major parties have fared under this system (table 32).

Table 32

Two Party (CDU/CSU and SPD) Share of Vote and Bundestag Seats 1949-1969[1].

	Vote (%)	Seats (%)
1949	60.2	67.1
1953	74.0	81.1
1957	82.0	88.3
1961	81.5	86.6
1965	86.9	90.1
1969	88.8	94.0

Obviously if minor parties were declining under this system their decline was not prevented. Rae calculated that, in overall terms, the West German system acted like a P.R. formula and gave an average vote-seat deviation of only 1.37 percent[2]. However, it exerted a stronger defractionalisation effect on legislative parties than a straight plurality formula and, on average, excluded 4.5 parties from the Bundestag[3].

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[1] Conradt, p.356

[2] Douglas W. Rae. The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws (2nd ed.; New Haven: Yales University Press, 1971), p.112

[3] Ibid., p.112.

This is the most important point since the most commonly expressed criticism of PR, in Britain, is that it would lead to a multiplicity of parties and obviously, from West German experience, this need not be so.

It is not the intention to review here all the possible voting systems that might be used in Australia or Britain but it is of value to compare how the West German system compares, in broad terms, with Mackenzie's voting criteria.

(a) A more truly representative system might be less of a deterrent to minor party candidature and thus the system might actually raise the quality of members. However, this effect would probably be marginal.

(b) The only difference would be that the single member constituencies would be twice the size, unless the legislature was doubled in numbers which would be technically feasible in Australia but not in Britain. There would obviously be some dilution but not insuperably, many American Senators represent constituencies of millions.

(c) The legislature should be more effective if more representative particularly in times of crisis. The average duration of one party majority governments in Britain, Canada and New Zealand is 4.3 years[1] compared to four years in West Germany. Coalition government is not necessarily bad government.

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[1] Jean Blondel. An Introduction to Comparative Government. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969), p.344.

(d) The West German system is a greatly improved reflection of opinion than either the present Australian or British systems.

(e) The elector would be required to take more interest in the election at the local level (constituency) and national level (list). Democracy needs both an informed and an active electorate.

(f) More equitable representation should automatically lead to greater public confidence in the system, but traditional outlooks do not change overnight.

(g) By-elections are possible for vacancies in the constituencies and the next name can automatically be used from the list for other vacancies.

(h) Political possibility is the most doubtful point, perhaps less so in Australia than in Britain. Australia does have a tradition of partial P.R. whereas Britain has virtually none, coupled with the mystique that the British system is the oldest and truest.

What would be the effect of introducing STV or the West German system in Britain? STV would have a marginal effect and would be more effective in multi-member constituencies. An analysis has been made of its probable effect in the eight major cities, outside London, in Britain, based on the February 1974 election results. The criterion for a 'major' city was five or more seats. The results are shown in table 33. A comparison of the

multi-member constituency seat percentages shows a much closer match with the percentage vote for all parties, including the Scottish Nationalists. The problem is that all parties gain (except Labour) at the expense of Labour. The Scottish Nationalists stand to gain 3 seats, the Conservatives 6 and the Liberals 8. It is scarcely surprising, even if somewhat amoral, that the Labour Party shows no enthusiasm for STV whatsoever.

Table 33

Percentage Vote, 1974 (%)
Seats with Multi-Member Constituency (Actual Seats February 1974)

	Cons.	Lib.	Lab.	SNP	Others	Total
Birmingham	39.5	10.7	48.4	0	1.5	
	5(3)	1(0)	6(9)	0	0	12(12)
Bristol	35.8	20.9	42.1	0	1.2	
	2(2)	1(0)	2(3)	0	0	5(5)
Edinburgh	40.0	15.5	31.8	12.6	0.1	
	2(4)	1(0)	2(2)	1(0)	0	6(6)
Glasgow	28.8	2.0	49.1	19.4	0.6	
	4(2)	0(0)	7(11)	2(0)	0	13(13)
Leeds	33.8	25.4	40.5	0	0.2	
	2(3)	2(0)	3(4)	0	0	7(7)
Liverpool	33.2	17.9	48.3	0	0.6	
	3(1)	1(0)	4(7)	0	0	8(8)
Manchester	32.6	18.5	48.5	0	0.4	
	3(1)	1(0)	4(7)	0	0	8(8)
Sheffield	29.9	15.3	54.3	0	0.5	
	2(1)	1(0)	3(5)	0	0	6(6)
TOTALS	34.2	14.7	46.1	4.4	0.7	
	23(17)	8(0)	31(48)	3(0)	0(0)	65(65)
% Actual Seats	26.2	0	73.8	0	0	
% M.M.C. Seats	35.4	12.3	47.7	4.6	0	

The other advantage of this approach is that redistribution is simplified. The city boundaries can be left unchanged and the number of seats varied with population changes, as is done periodically in Canada with the provinces. This should encourage more of a sense of civic community which should be beneficial. Under the present system Labour can win Glasgow Central with 9,400 votes since the total electorate is only 25,426 and the Liberals can lose in Pudsey with 18,011 votes because the electorate totals 65,780. The transfer of one Conservative seat from Glasgow to Leeds and one Labour seat from Glasgow to Sheffield would even out the constituency size without affecting the total seat distribution.

Introduction of the West German system in Britain would have a major effect in Britain and would have resulted in 125 Liberals in the House of Commons after the February 1974 election. This is obviously not a prospect viewed with any great favour by Labour or Conservative party managers.

In Australia a change from STV to the present British system would have relatively little effect. It would finally kill the already virtually dead DLP. If this is the only reason for its introduction by the ALP then it is a classic example of overkill. As long as the Liberals and Country Party have electoral pacts the change in the voting system itself will have little impact on the two conservative parties. A redistribution of boundaries may well reduce the number of Country Party seats but, unless one accepts the view that a rural vote in itself is worth more than an urban vote, this is long overdue.

A change to the West German system for the Australian House of Representatives would have a major effect on the relative position of the Country Party. If it was assumed that the total number of seats was doubled with the same number of single constituency seats the Country Party might well win its present seats on a single constituency basis. However, as it is at present over-represented by a factor approaching two it would obtain few or even none of the list seats. It would have a seat total very much in line with its vote, for the first time in its history. They will have to hope that the ALP will overlook this possibility whilst engaged in overkilling the DLP.

It is clear, therefore, that the differences in the present electoral systems in Australia and Britain are not significant in accounting for the differences in electoral success between the Country Party and the British Liberal Party. The key to the Country Party's success has been the concentration of its voting power in approximately one fifth of the total number of constituencies. If British Liberal Party support was similarly concentrated it would have well over one hundred seats even with a simple plurality system. A thinly spread vote can be just as disastrous to a party's electoral fortunes in Australia as evidenced by the lack of success of the DLP in elections to the House of Representatives.

The single transferable vote does have an influence on the bargaining power of a minor party but the only system that will give a minor party with evenly distributed support, a fair share of seats, is some system of proportional representation. The British Liberal Party would be better advised

to pursue some type of multi-member constituency system in urban areas, combined with a 'list' system for the country as a whole, if it desires equitable representation.

CHAPTER 9

RELATIONS WITH OTHER PARTIES

In their relations with the other parties in their respective countries there is obviously a very significant difference between the Liberal Party and the Country Party. Throughout the entire period under review the Liberal Party, with the exception of Lloyd George's coalition and Churchill's wartime coalition from 1940 to 1945, has been well away from being the actual government or even in serious contention since 1929. The Country Party on the other hand has spent many years as asignificant part of the Federal government and a number of the State governments.

The Liberals obviously have grave reason to be suspicious of the Conservatives in any type of coalition embrace.... "there are no conceivable circumstances in which the Liberal Party could enter into a coalition, alliance, partnership, understanding, or other collusive arrangement.... with the Conservative Party. Liberals are not separated from Conservatives merely by a difference in the way of doing things..... They are separated in their fundamental aims, in thought, in idea, in principle; and there is neither any event, nor any formula that can ever bridge this gulf"[1]. This was written immediately after the 1923 election but it still reflects the views of many Liberals and was a factor in March, 1974 immediately after

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[1]Trevor Wilson. "The Downfall of the Liberal Party, 1914-1935" pp. 286-287, quoting Liberal Magazine, December 1923.

the 1974 election when Heath was exploring with Thorpe the possibility of continuing as Prime Minister with some form of Liberal support.

Clement Davies had been a National Liberal for a number of years until leaving the group in November 1939[1] and even as late as May 1950 he had, as then leader of the Liberal Party, to make a public statement that there was "no intention of compromising the independence of the Liberal Party"[2]. This statement was made necessary after Lord Woolton, Chairman of the Conservative Party, had told Conservatives that he did not know "of any practical issues on which Liberals and Conservatives are not agreed"[3]. If the Liberals ever achieved a comparable position, in terms of relative strength to the Conservatives, as the Country Party had relative to the National Party in 1923, in Australia, then the Conservatives could find themselves faced with equally tough terms.

Relations with Labour have, historically, been more amicable, in fact Labour owes a great deal of its early success in displacing the Liberals as a major party to the Liberal Party itself. Gratitude is never particularly noticeable in politics but if Liberal strength should continue to grow Labour might find itself under some compulsion to be suitably grateful. As a radical party there is a natural tendency, outside areas such as nationalisation, for there to be more empathy between the Liberals and

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[1] Roy Douglas, p.244

[2] Ibid., p.261, quoting "The Times", 3 May 1950.

[3] Ibid., p.261.

corresponding minds in the Labour party. In 1965, there were fairly strong indications that Grimond was leading towards some sort of accommodation with Labour[1]. Fortunately for the Liberal Party he was rebuffed. The Liberal Party would be most unwise to make any long term accommodation with either Labour or Conservatives without, at very least, a major modification in the electoral system, otherwise as the weaker partner they could very easily be out-manoevred.

Over the past half-century there have been many moves from the upper levels of the Liberal Party to both Labour and Conservatives, in the latter case usually by the National Liberal route. An example is the case of one prominent pre-war Liberal, Sir Richard Acland, who left the Liberals in 1942 to become the leader of Common Wealth[2]. Later, Acland joined the Labour Party and became M.P. for Gravesend for several years before retiring from politics at a comparatively early age.

In Australia the Liberal Party "makes no secret of the fact that it looks forward to the day when there will be only one non-Labor party and that it is working to this end"[3]. In many respects the Country Party invites

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[1] Roy Douglas, p.281

[2] Common Wealth was a dissident radical group, unhappy with the wartime electoral truce and distrustful of the Chamberlain Conservatives. It attracted a diverse group of former Liberals, former members of the British Battalion of the Spanish Civil War International Brigade, Socialists, Communists and soon disintegrated after the war.

[3] Aitkin, p.335.

this attitude since its concentration on matters of rural interest has left the initiative, little as it has been, on other policy matters, to the Liberals[1].

Australian Conservatives have always taken a pragmatic approach to party organisation and policy, organisation in particular being regarded merely as a tool to win elections and achieve power.[2] The Australian National Federation was never anymore than a loose federation of state Nationalist Party organisations. After the Scullin Labor Government came to power in 1929 its concern was how to get them out and the Australian National Party was prepared to cooperate in any form, including its own disappearance, to achieve this. From such fundamental philosophy the United Australia Movement was created[3]. The UAP itself was led by a former Labor Premier of Tasmania and its task was made considerably easier by a three way split in Scullin's government in 1931. The UAP lost ground in 1934 and had to fall back on coalition with the Country Party under Page. Australian politics has thrown up some real characters and none more so than Page, a brilliant, eccentric man who also served as medical adviser to Lyons, his own Prime Minister[4].

Menzies and Page clashed from the start and supposedly this dated back to 1920 when Menzies' father lost his seat in the Victorian Legislative

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[1] Coleman, p.26

[2] John R. Williams. "The Organisation of the Australian National Party". The Australian Quarterly. 41(2), June 1969, p.41

[3] Ibid., p.43

[4] George Fairbanks. "Menzies Becomes Prime Minister, 1939". The Australian Quarterly. 40(2), June 1968, p.20.

Assembly to a Country Party candidate[1]. On the death of Lyons in office Page tried once again to play the rôle of kingmaker in his coalition partner's affairs. This time he tried to block Menzies from becoming leader of the UAP by starting a campaign in support of Bruce for Prime Minister - Bruce at the time was on a visit to Australia from his normal duties as High Commissioner in London. Hughes, who was 76 years old, almost won over Menzies but Menzies finally won the UAP leadership by 23 votes to 19[2]. Page promptly resigned and launched a bitter attack on Menzies which shocked even his own colleagues and Fadden and three other Country Party members temporarily left the Party[3].

After the outbreak of war in September 1939, the Country Party directed Page to offer to re-establish the coalition but Menzies, not unnaturally, flatly refused to have Page and the tables were turned. Page was persuaded to resign as Country Party leader and was succeeded by Cameron. In August 1941 Menzies was overthrown by a revolt in his own party and Fadden became Prime Minister for a few weeks until Labor came to power with the collapse of the UAP.

This brief summary clearly illustrates the sorts of pressures and manoeuvres between the Country Party and its allies which inevitably produce recriminations and tensions. The Country Party held together in

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[1] George Fairbanks. "Menzies Becomes Prime Minister, 1939". The Australian Quarterly. 40(2), June 1968, p.19

[2] Ibid., p.26.

[3] Ibid., p.28.

opposition much better than their ertswhile partners and it took all of Menzies great skill to put together a new Liberal Party from the ruins of the UAP[1]. A big factor in rallying conservatives of all hues together was the referendum in August 1944 when the ALP attempted to pass a constitutional amendment to give the Commonwealth Government power to regulate employment, marketing, and the production and distribution of goods.

At the State level there are varying degrees of competition and tension between the Country Party and the Liberals. Only in Victoria does the Country Party hold its options completely open with a willingness to come to an accommodation with the ALP as well as the Liberals. Aitkin discusses[2] the attempts of the New South Wales Liberals to bring about a merger between the Country and Liberal parties in the postwar years and particularly in the period 1944 to 1947. The situation in N.S.W. underlines the dangers to the Country Party of being one-sidedly anti-Labor and having achieved many of its immediate economic goals. However, to-date the Liberals have needed the Country Party as an ally and have made virtually no attempt to challenge the Country Party in its strongholds at election time.

The situation in Queensland is very different since being the junior partner in a composite government headed by a Country Party Premier

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[1] John R. Williams. "The Emergence of the Liberal Party of Australia". The Australian Quarterly. XXXIX(1) March 1967, pp.7-27.

[2] Don Aitkin. "The Country Party and Non-Labor Unity in New South Wales, 1944 to 1964". The Australian Journal of Politics and History. XI(2), 1965, pp.150-162.

is a continual source of irritation to Liberal members[1]. In the days of the lengthy Labor rule it was jointly agreed that the Country Party should contest the easy seats and that the richer and more highly organised Liberal Party in Queensland should contest the more difficult ones[2]. Originally the Country Party in Queensland opposed, though not unaminously, the introduction of preferential voting and perhaps not unnaturally feels that the Liberals motive for triangular contests is in order to secure the Premiership for themselves. It must equally naturally be most irksome to the Liberals to poll more votes than the Country Party and obtain fewer seats. At the federal level in Queensland the Liberals had an agreement not to contest Country Party held seats, but in Labor held seats the parties jointly nominated Liberal - Country Party candidates who, if elected, would then be free to choose with which party they sat in parliament. This produced an unexpected result, in the 1958 federal election, when a Country Party branch official was elected in Herbert and chose to join the Liberals[3].

In Victoria, Holt admitted in 1967 that "there may be some problems on the State scene in Victoria"[4] in referring to relations with the Country Party. In 1958 the Liberals would not agree to a combined team for the Senate, which meant that in 1958 all the non-Labor Senate candidates from Victoria were Liberals and in retaliation the Country Party contested

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[1] Overacker, p.276

[2] Ibid., p.276.

[3] Rawson, Australia Votes, p.27.

[4] Overacker, p.276 quoting the "Australian", 24 November 1967.

seats in the House of Representatives held by Liberals[1]. On the other hand, relations in the federal parliament between McEwen, who was from Victoria, and Menzies were generally good.

The situation in South Australia has become more complicated in the past decade. A separate Country Party was formed in 1963 and won its first seat in the 1973 House of Assembly election by coming to an "understanding" with the ALP[2]. There has also been a recent split in the Liberal and Country League with an active campaign in 1973 by the breakaway Liberal Movement. The Democratic Labor Party did not contest any seats and declared the Liberal Movement, ALP and Communist Party to all be unacceptable as second preference alternatives[3]. In terms of inter-party relations the situation can only be described as fluid.

The 1969 Federal election showed a sharp loss of Liberal seats to the benefit of the ALP. The Country Party held its own, a pre-election redistribution cut back its strength by one seat. The Country Party was thus relatively stronger relative to its Liberal ally which put McEwen in a strong bargaining position. He asked for, and got, an additional Country Party member in the Cabinet, to make a total of four and a total of seven out of 26 ministers[4]. This setback caused problems for Gorton with his own Liberal party, Fairbairn refused to serve under him and he had to transfer McMahon from the Treasury to External

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[1] Rawson, p.54.

[2] Dean Jaensch. "The South Australia State Elections 1973". The Australian Quarterly. 45(4) (December 1973), p.83.

[3] Ibid., p.84

[4] Anon. "Mr. Gorton's Growing Troubles". Round Table 238(1970) p. 206

Affairs. The 1972 election brought an end to the twenty-three year long rule of the Liberal/Country Party government and Ironmonger considered that this was mainly because the coalition had become stagnant in terms of economic innovations compared with the United States, Britain and Western Europe[1].

Finally, a word about the Democratic Labor Party - the 'other' third party in Australia. It started originally as the Anti-Communist Labor Party in Victoria in 1955 and officially became the DLP in June 1957 with branches in all states except Queensland. In 1962, a Queensland breakaway Labor Party with similar views affiliated with it. The DLP federal vote is relatively evenly distributed and it has never elected a member to the House of Representatives though, in 1968, it did have four Federal Senators. It has no prospect of winning office and has used its preferences to try to keep the ALP out. Normally, it can deliver about 80 percent of its vote as second preferences to the Liberals/Country Party. The 1974 federal elections were a major setback and resulted in the defeat of all the DLP candidates for both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

The DLP is basically a Catholic Centre Party[2] though in the 1967 Victoria Senate campaign two out of its three candidates were Protestants. It attracts young married voters, new immigrants with a deep fear of communism and white collar workers. Contrary to popular belief it is not sectarian.

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[1] D.S. Ironmonger. "Australia's New Government. Round Table 250(1973), pp.225-231.

[2] Robert R. Alford. Party and Society (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1963), p.200.

It was remarkably successful in its attempts to keep the ALP out-of-power federally and probably cost the ALP victory in two, maybe even three, federal elections. As a result they are a prime target of the ALP, now in office, who are seeking a basic alteration to the electoral system in order to deprive the DLP and its supporters of any future influence. The workings of 'democracy' are oft mysterious.

The recent merger between the Country Party and the DLP in Western Australia may be a portent for the future. The ALP when in power, has an uncanny knack for digging its own grave, partly by extreme policies and partly by galvanising all its opponents to effectively unite against them. Australian politics has never been dull and with a relatively even balance between Labor and non-Labor the relations between four parties are a continuing matter of interest. The emergence of the Australia Party in the past three federal elections poses a similar threat to the Liberal Party in particular, and to a lesser extent to the Country Party, as did the emergence of the DLP in the mid-fifties to the ALP.

CHAPTER 10

THE PARTIES FUTURE

The present (1974) is a time of flux for both the Country Party and the British Liberal Party. The Liberal Party received its largest voter support, in February 1974, in nearly fifty years. Jupp, writing in 1964, commented that the Country Party "has declined, not because of bad organisation or leadership or internal dissension. The classes and groups which brought it into existence are simply no longer as aggrieved nor as numerous as they were half a century ago"[1]. However, after the success of the Country Party and its Liberal partners in the 1966 elections Overacker saw the greatest danger to the Country Party in the Liberals obtaining a clear majority and being able to dispense with dependence on the Country Party for support[2].

The relative power of the Country Party has declined, at the Federal level, over the past fifty years. In the Bruce-Page Ministry the Country Party held five out of the eleven portfolios, in the Menzies Ministry they held less than a quarter of the portfolios. The biggest threat to the Country Party is the decline in the size of its support base, which is proceeding rapidly. The 1954 Census showed 13.3 percent of the work force

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[1] Jupp, p.161

[2] Overacker, p.317

engaged in primary production, by 1966 this had fallen by nearly a third to 9.4 percent[1]. The metropolitan and other urban areas are steadily rising in population whilst there is even a slight decline in rural population[2]. Any redistribution of Federal seats based on present population patterns is bound to have an adverse effect on the Country Party. However unpalatable this may be to the Country Party it is basically inevitable and justified. It will certainly reduce the extent of over-representation of the Country Party but is unlikely to completely eliminate their relatively favourable position. This position depends on the concentration of Country Party strength in approximately one-fifth of the total number of seats. The future of the Country Party therefore depends on its ability to hold onto its support in these areas.

This of course is true for any party. However, for a minor party it is more crucial to hold on to its relatively much fewer supporters who may become disheartened at perpetual minor party status. The Country Party has shared power, at the Federal level, for two-thirds of its existence and, in four of the states, for one-third of its existence which is not the normal state of affairs for a minor party. The very success of the Country Party in the past and the fact that it has achieved many of its goals, in such areas as marketing and the provision of rural transport facilities, may be

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[1] Malcolm MacKerras. "Another Second Preference Government". The Australian Quarterly. 41(4) (December 1969), p.32

[2] J.B. Condliffe. The Development of Australia. (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), pp.59, 60.

a factor against it now[1]. However, Coleman argues that "the particular interests it represents are so real, so definite a part of the country, that there is no point in looking forward to its disappearance"[2]. Alford considers that a third party in Australia may not be more significant than a pressure group in the United States and that it is the combination of disciplined major parties coupled with the alternative vote or proportional representation that forces the pressure to take the form of a new party[3].

There are a number of factors favouring the Country Party at present. Being in opposition federally, with the Liberals, against an active ALP government means that they are less likely to be subject to pressure from the Liberals who need their support if they are to regain power. The Liberals have relatively little to offer in the way of new policies and ten years ago appeared to be running out of initiative[4]. Under McEwen the Country Party attempted to broaden its base. He spoke of the need for balanced development and took a strong interest in secondary manufacturing and mineral development[5]. This tended to produce a rural backlash and threaten basic primary producer support[6]. For some time the Country Party has been losing strength in the Country towns[7]

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[1] Rawson, pp.57, 58.

[2] Coleman, p.26.

[3] Alford, p.307.

[4] Jupp, p.179.

[5] Aitkin, p.335.

[6] Overacker, p.310.

[7] Jupp, p.160.

and has been threatened by active rural wings of both the ALP and the Liberals[1].

The rationale for a purely country party thus becomes more and more questionable and in any situation where the major parties are evenly balanced the minor parties run the risk of having some of their election 'planks' stolen. The British Liberal Party is faced with a similar problem, for example Labour's current espousal of elected Assemblies for Scotland and Wales[2]. It is difficult for a minor party's supporters to accept that they may be achieving their own goals if one of their major party opponents adopts certain of their goals. It is, however, in its basic challenge to the two-party system that the British Liberal Party is posing a fundamental issue to the British electorate. Jeremy Thorpe repeatedly hammers at this issue so clearly expressed in the Liberal Election Manifesto (1974) in these words - "this country cannot be ruled from the extremes of right and left which set the people against each other - it must be run by a Government whose neutrality is unquestioned, whose policies are fair-minded and whose politics is not governed by vested interests. Politics has become sterile; the old two-party system has finally proved its inadequacy. Old political theories of unbridled free enterprise and undiluted socialism have been shown to be irrelevant.... Politics has gone away from the people and this in a democracy is the most dangerous development of recent years".

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[1] Aitkin, p.336.

[2] The Guardian, September 6, 1974, p.10

Some writers have tried to paint this as a virtue. Bonham comments that the two party system in Britain has "helped to concentrate attention on the distribution of wealth between classes. British politics are almost wholly innocent of those issues which cross the social lines in other lands - for example race, nationality, religion, town and country interests, regional interest, or the conflict between authoritarian and parliamentary methods"[1]. A notable recent convert to the evils of the present two party system and the merits of proportional representation for Britain is Professor Finer[2]. He considers that the Labour and Conservative Parties "have become increasingly the prisoners of their own clienteles". He notes that the average distribution of trade unionists votes over the past ten years has been 60 percent to Labour and 40 percent to other parties. Yet the trade union leadership is 100 percent Labour, or to the Left of the Labour Party. He leans towards the West German electoral system and method of financing parties.

Recent polls in Britain show increasing concern about extremism. A team from Essex University conducted a survey of 2,462 voters after the February 1974 election. They found that three out of eight voters regard either Labour or Conservative as "extreme". More than half thought that Labour divides the nation and forty percent called the Tories "bloody-minded"[3].

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[1] John Bonham. The Middle Class Vote. (London: Faber & Faber, 1954), pp.194, 195.

[2] S.E. Finer. "In Defence of Deadlock". The Guardian. September 7, 1974, p.11.

[3] Bernard Nossiter. "Coalition Idea Gains Favor in Britain". The Montreal Star. September 17, 1974, p.A-11, c.2.

The Liberals are not alone in their concern with the shortcomings of the British two-party system. Ian Harvey, a former Conservative M.P. and Joint Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office, advocated, six years ago, a new radical movement made up from the right of Labour, the centre and left of the Conservatives and the general mass of Liberals[1]. Christopher Mayhew, a former Labour Navy Minister, in his statement of resignation from the Labour Party to join the Liberals, wrote that the Labour Party "has become too vulnerable to the extreme left and too dependent on the unions.... at the present time I particularly support their (the Liberal Party) campaign for a political realignment. We need a revolt of the centre against extremes.... we must break away from the old Tory-Labour confrontation which sets one half of the country against the other. Just as sectarian political parties like those in Northern Ireland increase sectarian divisions, class parties increase class divisions"[2].

One of the most disturbing features of the current British socio-political scene is the mushrooming of extreme right organisations led by ex-military officers. Enoch Powell and his transfer from Wolverhampton to Northern Ireland is a relatively normal political move. The National Front is a fairly natural evolution from the Mosleyite movements. However, it is groups such as Great Britain 75, the National Association of Ratepayers

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[1] Ian Harvey. "Next Entry into Westminster". The Political Quarterly. 39(3) (July-September 1968), p.307.

[2] The Times, July 10, 1974, p.1, c.3

Action Groups and the Union Committee for Action under the leadership of Colonel Stirling, General Sir Walter Walker and Major Greenwood that are a new phenomenon. The British prefer their generals to stick to soldiering. Cromwell may have been efficient but life was more fun under Good King Charles. The Duke of Wellington was a military hero and a much hated political leader. The rationale for the existence of these movements is the fear of politically motivated strikes. The strike is basically a weapon of force not reason and its excessive use, and especially abuse, generates a reaction which may be even more undesirable, and the polarisation of views is accelerated.

One consequence of this has been a renewed interest in the idea of some form of coalition government. Professor Finer expressed the advantages as follows, "of this Parliament, something can be said. No major interest has been able to capture it.... Suppose this situation were to continue for a decade or more - then the consequences seem more likely to be benign than otherwise.... Capital and labour would have to carry on their conflict - or their collusion - on the industrial plane to which it belongs"[1]. Even among trade unionists there is a concern with current trends. In an August 1974 Gallup Poll 52 percent of the trade union members polled felt that in the present situation the trade unions should hold back wage claims and 54 percent of trade union members polled were against political involvement by the trade unions[2]. This comes at a time when total Labour Party

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[1] Finer, p.11, c.6, 7.

[2] "Union Members Want Pay Policy". The Sunday Telegraph. September 1, 1974, p.4, c.1,2.

membership has fallen by nearly 100,000 in the past year and individual membership of constituency parties by over five percent in the same period[1].

This poses a very real challenge to the Liberal Party. It is a basic long-term goal of the Liberals to replace Labour as the Radical opposition to the Conservatives[2]. To-date the Liberals have done best in seats held by the Conservatives. In the period 1950-1959, 203 Conservative, 110 Labour and 3 Liberal seats were unchanged. Lees considered that the best hope for the Liberals might well be in these 'safe' seats where the opposing major party effort is low[3]. As a result of the February 1974 election there are now forty-nine seats where the Liberals ran second and where a swing of $7\frac{1}{2}$ percent from the winning party to the Liberal candidate would result in a Liberal win. However, of these forty-nine seats 47 are Conservative held and only two Labour[4]. Liberal success here would thus seriously weaken the Conservatives whilst leaving Labour relatively untouched. Mr. Heath and Mr. Wilson are well aware of this and thus the Conservatives are relatively conciliatory to the Liberals and Labour relatively contemptuous.

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[1] The Sunday Telegraph. September 1, 1974, p.1, c.1.

[2] D.E. Butler and A. King. The British General Election of 1964 (London: Macmillan, 1965), p.98.

[3] J.D. Lees. "Aspects of Third-Party Campaigning in the 1964 General Election". Parliamentary Affairs. 19(1), 1966, p.88.

[4] The Economist. September 7, 1974, p.30, c.1, 2.

The challenge to the Liberals now is to make comparable inroads and pose equivalent threat into Labour held seats as they have in Conservative seats. If they can do this then the Liberal Party will be both a more viable and a more credible third party.

In conclusion, therefore, it is clear that the primary reason for the success of the Country Party, compared to the lack of success of the British Liberal Party, lies in the concentration of their voting strength into approximately one-fifth of the total seats. Compared to this the voting system differences are of relatively minor importance. The British Liberal Party is unlikely to obtain electoral 'justice' from the use of the single transferable vote alone and would be better advised to press for some combination of proportional representation that included a 'list' component. A Federal system with its larger number of senior level governments does make it easier for a minor party to maintain a presence but again only if its strength is concentrated in certain regions, as in Australia. Leadership, organisation and policy are the lifeblood of any political party and both the Country Party and the British Liberal Party are in relatively good shape in these areas. The Country Party may well be in for a slow decline due to the combination of a shrinking rural population, relative to total population, and the end in sight of their favoured electoral position. The British Liberal Party, on the other hand, may well be on the threshold of again achieving major party status. The October 1974 general election results disappointed expectations but still gave the party nearly one-fifth of the votes. If the Liberal Party does achieve

major party status again it will be because of the severity of Britain's social and economic problems and its responsibilities, in terms of seeking solutions to these problems, will be awesome.

APPENDIX

THE SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE AND PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEMS

The Single Transferable Vote (STV) system used in Australia is not a system of proportional representation. STV is applied, for elections to the House of Representatives, in single-member constituencies and was primarily introduced, and mainly used, as a means of avoiding splitting the anti-labor vote.

STV can only be used as a means towards proportional representation in multi-member constituencies. The best example of this is the Hare system as used in elections to the Dail in the Republic of Ireland. The average number of seats in a district is quite small, 3.7[1], and the Irish experience has not shown any proliferation of parties or tendencies towards unstable government. This is also basically the system used in Australian Senate Elections. Five Senators are normally elected from each State every three years. The quota for election is the total number of votes cast divided by the number of seats to be filled plus one, i.e. in this case by six, plus one.

As candidates reach the quota they are declared elected and their second preference votes distributed among the remaining candidates.

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[1] Rae, pp.36-38

In order to determine who wins the final seat the candidate with the lowest total number of votes is eliminated and his preferences counted and so on, until the last successful candidate reaches the quota. For example if 60,000 votes are cast for the five seats, the quota would be 60,000 divided by six plus one, i.e. 10,000 plus one = 10,001. When five successful candidates for the five seats have each reached the quota of 10,001 there are only 9,995 votes left for the sixth, and unsuccessful, candidate.

There are a number of variants on this basic system - d'Hondt highest average formula, Lague highest average formula, the imperiali largest remainder formula - all of which are used in Europe with the d'Hondt system the most common (Austria, Belgium, Finland, West Germany, Norway (until 1953, Lague after 1953) and Switzerland).

The size of the district has a big impact on the degree of closeness attained between proportion of seats and proportion of votes. The greater the number of seats in a district the closer it is possible to proportion seats won to votes cast. In some small countries, such as Israel and the Netherlands, the entire country is a single electoral district and the relationship between seats and votes is close.

Various devices can be used to either make it easier or more difficult for small parties to obtain seats. The imperiali formula used in Italy lowers the quota required to obtain a seat and thus makes it easier for small parties to secure a seat. The West German system requires a party

to win at least three seats by simple plurality plus obtaining at least five percent of the total national vote in order to secure representation from its list candidates. This has had the effect of steadily reducing the number of small, and often extremist, parties.

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